

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
ARCHÆOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA  
CENTRAL  
ARCHÆOLOGICAL  
LIBRARY

ACCESSION NO. 10607

CALL NO. 709.51/Ash.

D.G.A. 79



4)

# CHINESE ART

✓





PLATE I



SILK PAINTING

DETAIL FROM "THE ADMONITIONS OF THE INSTRUCTRESS," ASCRIBED TO  
KU K'AI-CHII: 4TH CENTURY A.D.

H. 9 in.

*British Museum, London*

[Frontispiece]

# CHINESE ART

## INTRODUCTION

*Laurence Binyon*

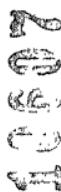
## PAINTING AND CALLIGRAPHY

*Laurence Binyon*

## SCULPTURE AND LACQUER

*Leigh Ashton*

## THE POTTER'S ART



*R. L. Hobson*

## BRONZES

*A. J. Koop*

## JADES

*Una Pope-Hennessy*

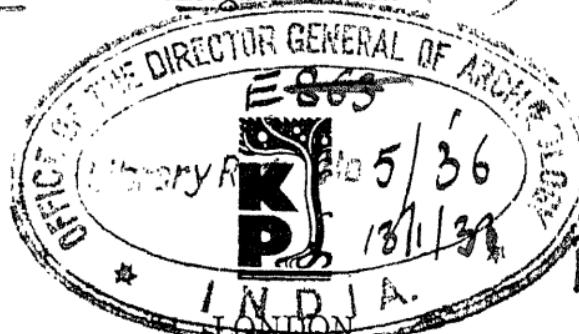


## TEXTILES

*Leigh Ashton (Ed.)*

709.51

Ash



KEGAN PAUL, TRENCH, TRUBNER & CO. LTD.  
BROADWAY HOUSE : CARTER LANE, LONDON, E.C.

1935

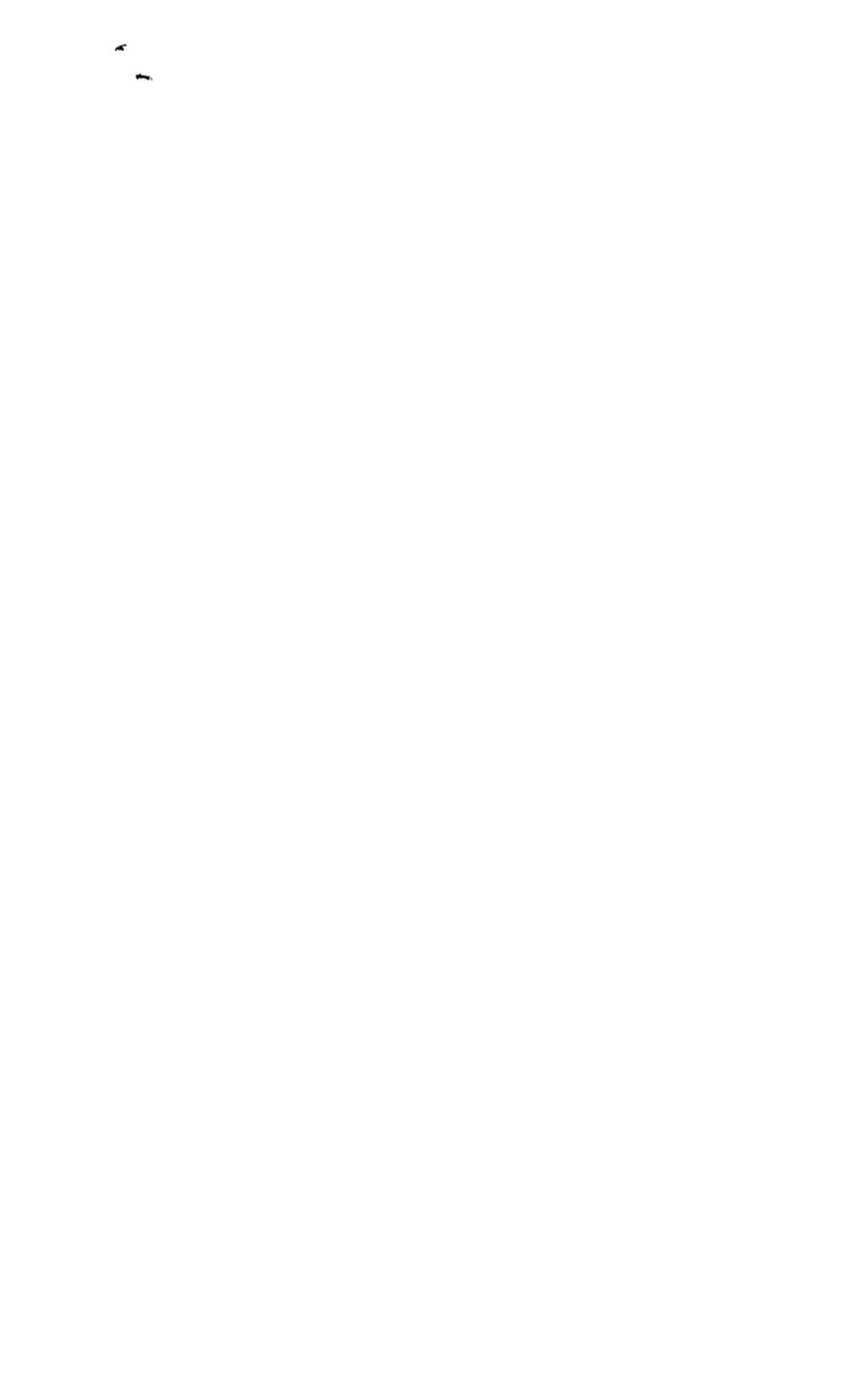
GENERAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
LIBRARY, NEW DELHI.

Acc. No. .... 10607  
Date ..... 28.6.61  
Call No. .... 709.51 / Ash

*First Edition . . . October 1935*  
*Reprinted . . . December 1935*

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
INTRODUCTION <i>by</i> LAURENCE BINYON, C.H., Hon. D.Litt. Oxford (Formerly Keeper of the Depart- ment of Prints and Drawings, British Museum)	ix
CHRONOLOGY . . . . .	xiii
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	xv
PAINTING AND CALLIGRAPHY <i>by</i> LAURENCE BINYON . . . . .	I
SCULPTURE AND LACQUER <i>by</i> LEIGH ASHTON, B.A. (Assistant-Keeper, Department of Ceramics, Victoria and Albert Museum) . . . . .	31
THE POTTER'S ART <i>by</i> R. L. HOBSON, C.B., B.A. (Keeper of the Department of Ceramics and Ethno- graphy, British Museum) . . . . .	45
BRONZES AND CLOISONNÉ ENAMEL <i>by</i> A. J. KOOP B.A. (Keeper of the Department of Metal- work, Victoria and Albert Museum) . . . . .	72
JADES <i>by</i> DAME UNA POPE-HENNESSY, D.B.E. (Lady of Grace of St. John of Jerusalem) . . . . .	86
TEXTILES <i>by</i> LEIGH ASHTON . . . . .	103



## LIST OF PLATES

		FACING PAGE
I	Detail from Ku K'ai-chih roll	<i>Frontispiece</i>
II	Detail from ladies preparing silk	4
III	Landscape: Ma Yüan	8
IV	Album leaf.	16
V	Fresco of priest	24
VI	Han bas-relief	32
VII	Gilt-bronze Buddhist votive group	36
VIII	Wood figure of Kuan-yin	40
IX	Lacquer throne of Ch'ien-lung	44
X	T'ang covered jar.	48
XI	<i>Kuan yao</i> vase	52
XII	<i>Tzü-chou</i> vase	56
XIII	15th century blue and white bottle	60
XIV	K'ang hsi green ground vase	64
XV	Ku yüeh hsüan porcelain bottle	68
XVI	(a) Bronze <i>ting</i>	72
	(b) Bronze <i>yu</i>	72
XVII	Bronze mirror	76
XVIII	Inlaid bronze <i>tsun</i>	80
XIX	Cloisonné enamelled bottle	84
XX	Jade <i>tsung</i>	88
XXI	(a) Jade fish	92
	(b) Jade sword-handle	92
XXII	Jade <i>pi</i>	96
XXIII	(a) Jade brush-pot	100
	(b) Jade mountain	100
XXIV	Silk brocade	104



## INTRODUCTION

*by*

LAURENCE BINYON

THIS volume is intended to serve as a help to those who wish to profit from the unique opportunity offered by the Exhibition at Burlington House and gain from the study of concrete examples a more definite and comprehensive idea of Chinese Art and its achievements than has hitherto been possible in this country.

In a sense we have long been familiar with Chinese Art ; more familiar perhaps than we consciously realize. It is not only that the porcelain and the silken fabrics have been in everyday use with us for so long, but in the whole realm of floral design, as seen in wall-papers and chintzes, Chinese inspiration has been dominant and pervasive ; in our furniture, too, the influence has been wide reaching. Thus in the eighteenth century, when Chinese things were still new and taken less for granted than now, people in Europe had a quite definite conception of Chinese Art. They thought of the Chinese as exquisite craftsmen, surpassingly sensitive to beauty of texture, form, and colour, who found their motives in the life of flowers and birds, or of quaint figures moving in a fantastic world. It never occurred to them to ask if all this wealth of delicate design might not be the reflection of something greater. They were accustomed to draw a hard line between the fine arts and the minor arts of decoration, and would probably have been quite incredulous if told that China had produced great masters comparable with those of Europe.

Only in the present century have the real scope and splendour of Chinese Art been revealed to the West. We now see that the chinoiseries which charmed the eighteenth

## INTRODUCTION

century reflected only the painting of a period of comparative decadence. Even the pottery of much earlier periods, and still more the painting and sculpture, would have made a very different impression. It is true that now, when we can view China's achievement in the arts in more just perspective, we are disconcerted by the enormous wastage and destruction from which so little has survived to make real to us the grandeur of the art of the most creative epochs. Especially is this the case with painting, which came to be the central and most typical of the arts of China. Nevertheless, we have tangible evidences of a pictorial art maintained and flourishing from almost the beginning of the Christian era to the present day, and still alive. And the magnificent bronzes carry us back to a remote period B.C.

The mental inheritance of the Chinese is, of course, entirely different from our own ; and the English lover of art may find at first a stumbling-block in the unfamiliar figures from Taoist or Buddhist legend recurring in painting and sculpture and repeated on the porcelains. But let him persevere a little ; no laborious effort is needed to realize that all this wealth of imagery embodies conceptions not remote from ourselves but belonging to the very stuff of humanity and easily accessible to our sympathies ; the aspirations after an immortal life, the dreams of paradise, the belief in beatified beings transcending mankind in power and in compassion. Nay, more : the thoughts underlying certain phases of Chinese Art will seem peculiarly modern, especially the acceptance of man's true place in the vastness of the universe, the intuition of a continuity of life through all creation, the sympathy with every form of life outside humanity no less than within it. Hence the absence of what European Art has found the most expressive of all symbols, the nude human form. Hence the discovery of landscape as an independent art centuries before it was anything in Europe but a setting and background for human events ; hence the choice of flowers and birds, with us placed in a minor category, as motives equally significant with human figures.

The language in which the Chinese artists, with their rhythmical flowing line, their delight in movement, find expression, is one that is eloquent to all of us. In all this

art, whatever the material—and there is no hard frontier between art and craft—everyone must feel the extraordinary refinement of the senses in which this race has excelled all others. But behind all this cultivation of the subtleties of sight and touch, and flowing into it from the mind, lies a world of humane wisdom, of philosophic serenity, of lofty aspiration, of gentleness and humour. It is an art more contemplative than that of Europe; action and events contribute far less to its subject-matter.

All the various manifestations of the Chinese genius in art will be illustrated in the Exhibition, with an abundance and a choiceness immensely beyond anything seen hitherto in Europe. It is hoped that this little book may help those who visit it to appreciate the art of China with an increase of pleasure and understanding, for it is an art which, yielding its secrets by degrees, richly repays the student of its beauties.





## CHRONOLOGY

C.	3500	-2000 B.C.	NEOLITHIC CULTURE												
C.	1766	-1122 B.C.	SHANG-YIN DYNASTY												
			CHOU DYNASTY 1122-249 B.C.												
			PERIODS OF SPRING AND AUTUMN ANNALS C. 722-481 B.C.												
			WARRING STATES C. 481-205 B.C.												
	221	- 206 B.C.	EMPIRE OF SHIH HUANG TI												
	206 B.C.-A.D. 220		HAN DYNASTY												
A.D.	220	- 589	THE SIX DYNASTIES												
A.D.	220	- 280	THE THREE KINGDOMS												
A.D.	386- 589		<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">NORTH</td> <td style="text-align: center;">SOUTH</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Wei Tartars</td> <td>Native Dynasties</td> </tr> <tr> <td>A.D. 386-535</td> <td>Liu Sung (420-478)</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Southern Ch'i (479-501)</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Liang (502-556)</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>Ch'en (557-589)</td> </tr> </table>	NORTH	SOUTH	Wei Tartars	Native Dynasties	A.D. 386-535	Liu Sung (420-478)		Southern Ch'i (479-501)		Liang (502-556)		Ch'en (557-589)
NORTH	SOUTH														
Wei Tartars	Native Dynasties														
A.D. 386-535	Liu Sung (420-478)														
	Southern Ch'i (479-501)														
	Liang (502-556)														
	Ch'en (557-589)														
		Western Wei	Eastern Wei												
		A.D. 535-557	A.D. 534-550												
		Northern Chou	Northern Ch'i												
		A.D. 557-581	A.D. 550-577												
A.D.	581- 618		SUI DYNASTY												
A.D.	618- 906		T'ANG DYNASTY												
A.D.	907- 960		FIVE DYNASTIES												
A.D.	960-1279		SUNG DYNASTY												
A.D.	1280-1368		YUAN DYNASTY												
A.D.	1368-1644		MING DYNASTY :												
			1368-1398 Hung Wu												
			1403-1424 Yung Lo												
			1426-1435 Hsüan Tê												
			1465-1487 Ch'eng Hua												
			1488-1505 Hung Chih												
			1506-1521 Chêng Tê												
			1522-1566 Chia Ching												
			1567-1572 Lung Ch'ing												
			1573-1620 Wan Li												
	1644-1912		CH'ING DYNASTY :												
			1662-1722 K'ang Hsi												
			1723-1735 Yung Chêng												
			1736-1795 Ch'ien Lung												



## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

#### GENERAL

BUSHELL. *Chinese Art.* 2 vols. 1904-06.  
FENOLLOSA. *Epochs of Chinese and Japanese Art.* (2 vols.)  
2nd edition, revised. 1913.  
BURLINGTON MAGAZINE. *Monograph; Chinese Art.* 1925.  
BERLIN. *Ausstellung Chinesische Kunst; Catalogue.* 1929.  
SIRÉN. *History of Early Chinese Art.* 4 vols. 1929.  
KÜMMEL. *Chinesische Kunst.* 1929.  
GROUSSET. *Civilizations of the East, III, China.* 1934.  
ASHTON AND GRAY. *Chinese Art.* 1935.

#### PERIODICALS

*Burlingtons Magazine; Revue des Arts Asiatiques; Ostasiatische Zeitschrift; Bulletin of the Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm; Kokka; Bijutsu Kenkyu; Artibus Asiae.*

#### PAINTING

WALEY. *Introduction to the Study of Chinese Painting.* 1923.  
TOKYO. *Exhibition of Famous Chinese Paintings.* 1924. 4 vols.  
FISCHER. *Die Chinesische Malerei der Han-dynastie.* 1931.  
BINYON. *Chinese Paintings in English Collections.* 1927.  
TOMITA. *Chinese Paintings in Boston Museum.* 1933.  
BINYON. *Painting in the Far East* (4th ed.). 1934.

#### TEXTILES

YETTS. *Discoveries of the Kožlóv Expedition.* "Burlingtons Magazine," April. 1926. (A few copies with additions were reprinted for the author and distributed privately).  
VON FALKE. *Seidenweberei* (2 vols.). 1913.  
ANDREWS. *Ancient Chinese Figured Silks.* 1920.  
PRIEST AND SIMMONS. *Chinese Textiles.* New York. Metropolitan Museum. (No date.)  
KENDRICK AND TATTERSALL. *Hand Woven Carpets, Oriental and European.* (2 vols.) 1922.

#### SCULPTURE

CHAVANNES. *Mission Archéologique dans la Chine Septentrionale* (3 vols.). 1913-15.  
SEGALEN, DE VOISINS ET LARTIGUE. *Mission Archéologique en Chine.* 1923.

ASHTON. *Introduction to the Study of Chinese Sculpture*. 1924.  
 SIRÉN. *Chinese Sculpture* (4 vols.). 1925.  
 TOKIWA AND SEKINO. *Buddhist Monuments in China*. 5 vols.  
 of plates, 5 vols. Japanese text, and English Translation of  
 Vols. 1-3. Exact date unknown—sometime in the early  
 nineteen twenties.

## BRONZES

KOOP. *Early Chinese Bronzes*. 1924.  
 YETTS. *Chinese Bronzes*. 1925. Reprint (with additions) of  
 article in *Burlington Magazine Monograph Chinese Art*. A  
 small issue privately printed for author).  
 HAMADA. *Catalogue of the Sumitomo Collection*. 1921-26.  
 STOCKHOLM. *Ostasiatiska Samlingarna Exhibition*, 1933.  
 WHITE. *Tombs of Old Lo-yang*. 1934.  
 YETTS. *Ritual Bronzes of Ancient China*. (In Press).  
 " *Catalogue of the Eumorfopoulos Collection of Bronzes,  
 Sculpture, Etc.* Vols. 1 and 2. 1929-30.

## CERAMICS

BUSHELL. *Description of Chinese Pottery and Porcelain: Being a  
 translation of the T'ao Shuo*. 1910.  
 HOBSON. *Chinese Pottery and Porcelain* (2 vols.). 1915.  
 HETHERINGTON. *Early Ceramic Wares of China*. 1922.  
 HOBSON. *Wares of the Ming Dynasty*. 1923.  
 " *Later Ceramic Wares of China*. 1925.  
 " *Catalogue of the Eumorfopoulos Collection*. Vols. 1-6.  
 1925-28.  
 " *Catalogue of Chinese Pottery and Porcelain in the David  
 Collection*. 1934.

## JADE

LAUFER. *Jade*. 1912.  
 POPE-HENNESSY. *Early Chinese Jades*. 1923.  
 PELLiot. *Les jades archaïques de Chine*. 1925.

# PAINTING AND CALLIGRAPHY

*by*

LAURENCE BINYON

IF we are truly to appreciate any work of art it is idle to approach it from the outside, bringing with us all our prejudices and preconceptions. We must try to enter into the mind of the man who made it, discover what his aim was and consider how far he has achieved his aim. In the case of Chinese painting, produced by a race so remote from Europe, while it is easy to enjoy the decorative qualities presented by its surface, we cannot understand it without some knowledge of the Chinese conception of picture-making, of the Chinese painter's approach to his subject, and of the mental background behind his art. The barrier of strangeness is not difficult to overcome: indeed, one will be less surprised at the strangeness in this art than at its points of contact with our own, its power of expressing conceptions which are in our consciousness to-day, so that often there seems no veil of time or distance between ourselves in Europe and the thoughts and feelings of artists separated from us by half the world and a thousand years of time.

So before sketching the history of pictorial art in China, it will be well to indicate certain fundamental conditions which have determined its special character.

Painting and writing are said to have been invented together. They are two branches of the same art. The instrument of both is the brush. Painters often prefer to paint in ink alone; and if colour is used, whether "light colour" or "full colour", the foundation of the picture is still the ink outline. Chinese ink, which we call "Indian ink", is made of lamp-black and glue; it is capable of the

finest gradations from faint grey to the deepest black. The brush may vary from a single hair to the size of a small broom.

The Chinese language, as is well known, has no alphabet. For every word there is a separate character. These characters began by being rudimentary pictures of ideas, but the pictorial foundation now survives in but a few ; so that though each ideograph suggests to the mind an image or an idea, it does not in itself (with a few exceptions) suggest an image to the eye. But the writer whose writing is an art is just as much concerned as a painter with beauty and expressiveness of stroke. His writing is an intimate expression of his own nature ; it requires the utmost concentration, if the strokes are to be truly alive. Laborious care is of no avail. The absorbent silk or paper allows of no second thoughts, no correction. Everything must be pre-determined in the mind and swiftly, decisively executed.

For us Occidentals it is very difficult, probably impossible, to appreciate as a Chinese does the quality of the brush-stroke in hand-writing : its subtleties are beyond us. Still, with a certain amount of experience and attention, we can acquire an increasing insight into this fastidious art and derive from it an increasing pleasure. For alike in its force and its sensitiveness the brush-stroke does communicate life. Chinese critics will compare it to the play of a sword in the hands of an expert swordsman, or to the movements of a mettlesome horse controlled by a masterly rider. If you study a piece of fine writing with these conceptions in your mind, you will find yourself taking the same sort of pleasure that one has in the clean sharp shapes of iris-blades thrusting up from the soil, or the swift swerve of water past a stone.

These characteristics of brush-writing are taken over into painting. How intimately the two arts are associated may be seen in the pictures or small sketches of bamboos, to which some painters would devote a life-time. The bamboo symbolizes for the Chinese the noble character bending before adversity but never broken ; and that will be at the back of the artist's mind, while his hand concentrates on communicating the tingle of life in the growth of the

smooth jointed stem, and the springing leaves, and at the same time his own feeling. Sometimes a spray of bamboo and a piece of rock will seem a sort of signature of the artist. The shadow of a bamboo on a white wall would be a favourite exercise for the 'prentice-painter.

Calligraphy as an element in painting can of course be a danger. Just as a poet uses words with a two-fold intention, for their significance and their sound, and may be seduced by the beauty of sound into losing strength and structure, so the painter exulting in his sweeping brush may become empty and unmeaning. But in the finest Chinese painting there is a fusion of the two aims.

Every art is conditioned by its materials. A Chinese painting which—apart from frescoes—is in ink or water-colour on silk or paper, is something quite different from an oil-painting on canvas. Medium and surface both prompt to a different usage, a different kind of execution, a different kind of felicity to be aimed at. European methods and materials have lent themselves too readily to a gradual and laborious process of building up a picture, to copying objects before the eye, and to what Reynolds called the "mental laziness" of finishing the parts. With the Chinese, on the contrary, it is mental exertion and concentration, the storing of the memory from long observation, that is indispensable. The whole picture must be entire in the painter's mind before he puts brush to paper or silk: he does not copy what is before his eye.

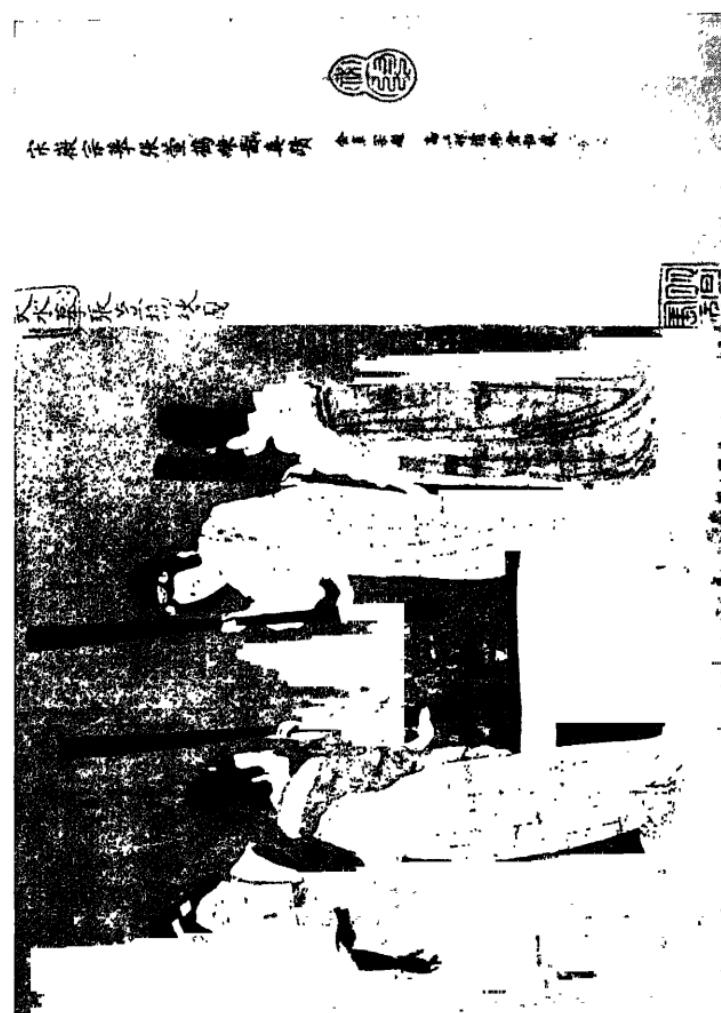
The complete representation of a scene is not aimed at: it is rather a pictorial motive chosen from the world of nature, just as a lyric poet, if he chooses his theme from nature, concentrates on that, and the feeling it evokes in him, and leaves out all irrelevant detail. And here a word must be said on the close alliance with poetry which is characteristic of Chinese painting. Since hand-writing demanded a power of control over the brush such as few European painters have possessed, a man trained in fine handwriting could easily become a painter, especially in the impressionist style of ink-painting. And he might be, not only a masterly writer in the calligraphic sense, but also a gifted man of letters. In fact, many poets were also painters; and many painters were what we should

call amateurs rather than professionals : they painted for their own pleasure. The scholar, the man of letters, is the man who enjoys the greatest esteem in China ; and so we do not wonder that Chinese painting has a literary flavour. "Literary" in current criticism with us is a term of reproach as applied to painting ; and rightly so when a painter tries to express through silent form and colour what could be better expressed in words. But the Chinese artists are seldom "literary" in this sense : they do, however, prize the expression through painting of a poetic mood. And the affinity is deeper than this ; for poetry lives by its rhythmical form, and rhythmical form is a constant element in Chinese art, much more emphasized than in Western art.

With all its fine observation, Chinese painting is always a little removed from the actual. Shadows are never represented, and this alone makes for a certain ideality, so that we need not be troubled by the absence of what we call "perspective". In landscape, by range of tone, distance and atmosphere are perfectly suggested. The adoption of a bird's-eye point of view prevents the confusion of planes ; indeed the system of perspective gradually developed resembles that of European painting before, at the Renaissance, perspective was studied as a science and applied to painting. Linear perspective the Chinese neglect. Anatomy again was not studied for its own sake. But modelling is suggested by the contours of form, often with extraordinary success.

Chinese paintings are in the form of hanging pictures, or of horizontal rolls. The influence of writing on painting appears again in this latter form, peculiar to China and Japan. For this was the form in which manuscripts were written, beginning at the right, and it was adopted by the painters, who sometimes combined it with writing. Unlike the European frieze, these rolls are not meant to be seen all at once ; they are gradually unrolled to show a foot or two of length at a time and enjoyed at leisure. It is like reading a book. This form was especially adapted to narrative subjects, but was most happily developed in landscape, where one can in imagination travel through a whole tract of country. Though contrary to our accepted

PLATE II



DETAIL FROM "LADIES PREPARING SILK," BY EMPEROR HU TSUNG (A.D. 1082-1135)  
H. 11 in.

SILK PAINTING

*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*

[Face p. 4.]



ideas of picture-making, this is a very delightful form. Besides the rolls and the hanging-pictures, there are small paintings which are mounted in albums, and also vast wall-paintings, of which however very few survive.

*Subjects.*—The subjects of the Chinese painter are not different in kind from those of Europe, though there is a difference in the relative importance given to certain classes of subject.

The three strands of which Chinese civilization is composed—Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism—have each inspired and fostered art. Confucianism, with its emphasis on social duty and reverence for the past, valued portraiture of illustrious persons and representations of historic scenes. The tendencies associated with Lao-tzü, the near contemporary and rival of Confucius, find expression in what one might call the fairy-tale aspect of the Chinese imagination, and more fruitfully in an art of landscape steeped in the love of solitude and intimate communion with Nature. Buddhism inspired the portrayal of heavenly presences, powers of serenity and compassion, assisting the human soul in its efforts toward self-enlightenment. Later also a special phase of Buddhism combined with Taoism to tinge the landscape art with a warmth of religious inspiration.

Indeed, the most striking feature of Chinese art is the early development—far earlier than in Europe—of landscape as an independent motive, and the value set upon it. Landscape was valued above all other kinds of painting, because it comprehended everything, man included. Man was not conceived of as the lord of creation, to whose service all other life ministered, but as one among countless orders of beings in the universe, through which one life continually streams. It seems that for the Chinese mind there was a sort of exultation in the consciousness of belonging to this eternal ever-changing stream of life. The supreme virtue in a work of art was its capacity to embody and communicate the power of this universal life through the particular subject, of whatever kind. And so it is not surprising that the Chinese show in their art a peculiar gift for movement, flowing and rhythmical movement. All over the world people dream that they have the power of floating in the air; and the movements most

nearly approaching such a wish-fulfilment, such as dancing or skating, yield a unique pleasure. This kind of movement seems specially congenial to Chinese imagination, and the painters suggest it, in the fairy forms of Taoism, in the heavenly forms of Buddhism, with singular felicity.

This refusal to centre interest in man and his works, this flowing out of the mind into all forms of life, is what makes the main contrast between Chinese and Western art. It is a happier art than ours. An element of playfulness is often present where we should not expect it. There are no great works of tragic passion. Portraiture again holds no such place as in European art. Portraits are usually memorial portraits, associated with the worship of ancestors or painted for moral edification, not to indulge the vanity of the sitter. On the other hand, the life of animals, birds, and flowers, becomes a far more significant motive than with us. Flowers especially; for all Chinese have a reverential passion for flowers. In painting they are usually associated with birds, as if the songs and movements of the birds lent an eloquence to the silence of the flowers. All this side of Chinese painting should make a special appeal to English people, in whom the love of flowers and animals and of all natural beauty is instinctive.

Not content with picturing the life of animals, birds and insects, the Chinese have imagined a number of fabulous creatures, symbols of felicity or power, such as the bird for which the "Phoenix" has been generally used as a Western equivalent, and above all the Dragon. The Dragon is associated with the powers, at once destructive and beneficent, of water, clouds and rain; it came to symbolize also the power of the spirit.

Scenes from daily life, though less common, were not neglected, even in early times. Groups of ladies engaged in household occupations; girls dancing to music; children playing in gardens; lovers meeting; women gathering flowers; motives like these frequently engage the artists. Sometimes there will be a suffusion of poetic feeling in the capture of "a golden moment" of life, an idyl or reverie in the vein we associate with Giorgione.

In general we may say that the nearer the painter comes to actuality the more he indulges in colour; when it is the

spirit of things he contemplates and wishes to evoke, he is apt to abstain from colour altogether ; the marvellous tones of ink suffice. Gifted with a fastidious taste for harmony in colour, the Chinese are reticent in its use. No art again is more skilled in bringing out the value of space, of the empty intervals, in a design.

Far more than has been the case in Europe, Chinese painting has suffered from the injuries of Time and from immense destruction. The materials used are of course much more fragile than those employed in Europe. And besides the accidents of fire and flood, whole collections have been deliberately destroyed. This was the case with the precious and extensive collection made by the emperor Hui Tsung, when his capital was taken by the Tartars in the twelfth century : a terrible loss to posterity. Not less a calamity was the destruction in A.D. 845 of countless Buddhist wall-paintings, including what were probably the greatest master-pieces ever produced in China. Properly cared for, these might well have lasted to our own day.

Though the criticism of art has been the theme of writers from very early times, and connoisseurship was always highly valued, the means of comparison with authentic and documented master-works were limited. There were no great public galleries or museums. On the other hand, copies and forgeries have always abounded. Dealers also have a habit of putting false seals and signatures of the painters most in demand on much later works, often of the most widely divergent styles. Western study of Chinese painting is therefore hampered by peculiar difficulties. Little more than a generation ago the subject was quite unexplored. It is really a discovery of the present century, though we should not forget that Dr. William Anderson made a collection of Chinese pictures in Japan, as an appendix to his Japanese collection, before 1881, when his whole collection was bought by the British Museum. In his catalogue made for the Museum, Anderson gave a brief sketch of the history of painting in China and showed that he fully appreciated the importance of the subject. Fenollosa, who also acquired his knowledge in Japan at the same period, was equally a pioneer and a profound student of the material available in his day : his enthusiasm fired

American collectors, and America in this field is richer than Europe.

But though a few collectors and special students foresaw that Chinese painting would prove a revelation to the West, still the general public had hardly a notion of its existence. By now a great deal has been written in the form of books, monographs and articles ; and the publication by the Japanese of the numerous fine Chinese paintings in Japan has afforded a much-needed basis for comparison. Similar publications have of late appeared in China. It must be realized, however, that the problems of attribution remain very difficult. There are few cases in which a picture is authenticated beyond all doubt. Old pictures generally have attached to them testimonies to their merit and genuineness by eminent critics ; but these can be forged as well as the pictures themselves, or a genuine writing attached to a picture it does not refer to. Old pictures also usually bear a number of "seals", stamped in vermilion ; one of these may be the painter's own seal, the others will be those of former owners or of famous connoisseurs who have seen and approved the painting. These seals can also be forged. It is obvious therefore that attribution of works to particular masters, or even periods, is a question which demands experience, knowledge, and sensitiveness to differences in quality.

We come in the end to base our judgment on intrinsic æsthetic quality controlled by study of the best-authenticated works available ; and it is the æsthetic quality which will really interest the art-lover in this country rather than questions of authorship and date.

In the following sketch only a few names of artists representative of their time will be mentioned, but an attempt will be made to define in some measure the character of the different epochs. These epochs are not difficult to remember. The main periods for painting are :—

The T'ang Dynasty, A.D. 618-906.

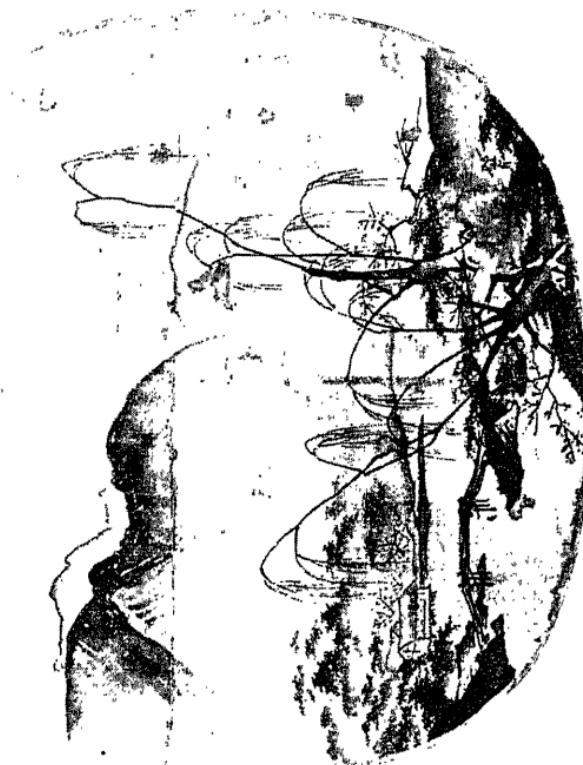
The Sung Dynasty, A.D. 960-1279.

The Yüan or Mongol Dynasty, A.D. 1280-1368.

The Ming Dynasty, A.D. 1368-1644.

The Ch'ing or Manchu Dynasty, A.D. 1644-1911.

PLATE III



SILK PAINTING  
“BARE WILLOWS AND DISTANT MOUNTAINS,” BY MA YUAN C. A.D. 1190-1225  
Diam. 9 in.

*Museum of Fine Arts, Boston*

[Face p. 8.]



## PRE-T'ANG DYNASTIES

The Han Dynasty is one of the greatest in the history of the Empire. It covers the two centuries before Christ and the two centuries after Christ ; and during these four hundred years the art of painting seems to have made a great stride forward, though this is largely a matter of inference from literary records. We are told of wall-paintings in the imperial palaces representing mythological subjects, and, later, portraits of illustrious persons, designed to edify by their ennobling presence. In certain tombs of the Han period are preserved compositions engraved on stone having the character of transcripts from paintings. The conventions used for presenting a scene belong to primitive art ; but there is notable power in communicating through line and silhouette the movement and the volume of forms. Besides these stone-engravings there are a few actual paintings recovered from tombs in Honan, decorating slabs of brick. These are important only as an index to the character of the lost wall-paintings of the period. Executed with a rapid lightness of touch, the figures surprise by their vitality, the seizure of natural attitude and gesture ; a sense of living relation between the forms is communicated.

It is not till first century A.D. that we hear definitely of silk and paper being used for painting, silk being the earlier and remaining the favourite material. Chinese painting, as we know it, must be judged by works on silk or paper ; for to our great loss almost all the countless frescoes of the greater periods have been destroyed. Though the technique differed from that of Italian fresco, the term is not incorrect when the pigment was applied, as was usually the case, to the wet plaster.

Between the Han Dynasty and the T'ang, under which the empire was once more consolidated, is the period known as that of the Six Dynasties, during which many painters achieved fame. Of one of these we are fortunate enough to possess a tangible relic.

In the British Museum, at the end of the Prints and Drawings Gallery, there is exhibited a painting of unique importance for our knowledge of the early art. It is one of the

Museum's rarest treasures. The most famous painter of the fourth century A.D. was Ku K'ai-chih, and to him it has always been ascribed. Whether by him or not, it is now generally agreed by scholars of most authority that it is earlier than the beginning of the T'ang Dynasty (seventh century). No other painting on silk or paper exists for which such a claim can be justified; and it is in itself a work of consummate quality. At first sight it will not perhaps so much impress; but the more it is studied, the more it will yield up. Originally a horizontal scroll, it has been framed for its better preservation. It is known as The Admonitions of the Instructress in the Palace.

How surprising it is to find at this early period a work so refined, so far removed from the primitive and the rude! The groups and scenes illustrate a little discourse addressed to the ladies of the Imperial household: it counsels modesty, self-sacrifice, sincerity, and the acceptance of inevitable change in human affairs. What dignity and gentleness is in those gracious forms! How sure and sensitive the brush-line which delineates their movements and indicates so expressively the glances of their eyes! They wear long scarves which seem to float as in the stirring of a breeze. It is all intimately living, securely civilized; no pomp, no formality, though the life depicted has something of the grace of an ordered ceremonial.

It would be a mistake to suppose that the art of this time was all of this character. All through the history of Chinese painting we find that there are definitely established styles adapted to different kinds of subject, as well as styles created by certain masters and associated with their names which later painters, even the most eminent, will imitate and adopt at will. We knew that Ku K'ai-chih painted large frescoes of Buddhist subjects, and these were probably in a manner far removed from the intimacy of the Admonitions. In that picture there is only one trace of primitive style, and that is in the treatment of a scene which shows a hunter shooting at birds and animals on a mountain no taller than himself. But before very long, in the T'ang era, landscape was to be developed as an independent art.

Another work of Ku K'ai-chih's is known through an early copy in the Freer Collection at Washington. A paint-

ing of the twelfth or thirteenth century now in the British Museum, with a landscape background by a later hand, preserves the same design. This illustrates the story of a poet who fell in love with a river-nymph, who returns his love, but he shrinks from accompanying her to the depths of the stream and she in dudgeon departs on a chariot drawn by six dragons. Here we have the fairy-tale side of Chinese art.

In this same period a painter who was also a critic formulated a set of Six Canons or standards by which the worth of a painting should be judged. The most important is the first, which Prof. H. A. Giles translated by "Rhythmic Vitality". Other authorities deny that the idea of rhythm is involved, and it appears that different meanings have been attached to this Canon at different periods. The fundamental idea seems to correspond to what we mean when we use terms like "inspiration", "demonic", "creative", but with an emphasis on life and movement—not merely isolated and individual life, but the universal spirit of life which animates and moves all things. Thus a master's pictures were thought to partake of the nature of immortal spirits; and there are numerous stories of dragons, for instance, which when the master added the final touch to them took bodily life and vanished, or of horses that galloped away into space. When we contrast such stories with the stories of European artists who painted fruit so that birds mistook them for real fruit, or men so that people thought them actual men, we find an illuminating difference of conception. The Six Canons were formulated in the sixth century, but no doubt only crystallized the accepted Chinese ideas about art.

#### THE T'ANG DYNASTY

Could all the lost works of the T'ang Dynasty be restored to our sight, we should probably say that this was one of the greatest periods of art that the world has known. Even from the pottery figures recovered during this century from tombs we can see the character of the period's art; its abounding vitality, its force, its feeling for volume, its capacity for grandeur; and we can divine to some degree what the work of the great T'ang masters was like.

But of actual painting belonging to the period there is lamentably little that remains.

A decided change now comes upon the art. China is popularly thought of as a country jealously self-enclosed and hostile to all things foreign. Under the T'ang emperors, with the vast expansion westward of Chinese power, there was full and fruitful contact with more Western countries and with India. There was a lively curiosity in the strange faces and strange dresses of the people who brought annual tribute from the lands beyond the Western frontier. The tribute was often paid in the form of fine horses : thousands of these were in the imperial stables and were a favourite subject for painters, as were also the tribute-bearers themselves. The silk trade, with its caravans crossing the desert and carrying bales to the shores of the Mediterranean and to Europe, stimulated the intercourse with foreigners.

Even more important for Chinese art was the contact with India, the Buddhists' Holy Land ; for while Buddhism was beginning to decay in the land of its birth it was taking firm hold on China. Thousands of Indian monks were welcomed as teachers. Indian statues and paintings were imported and formed the models for Buddhist artists.

We must conceive of China, then, in the eighth century, not as an exclusive, self-enclosed, empire but as a centre of the highest civilization then known in the world, embracing new ideas with fervour, attracting and welcoming foreigners and people of various faiths—Manichaeans and Christians as well as Buddhists—and radiating its influence over Asia, where the prestige of its art rivalled that which Greek art has enjoyed in Europe.

What of the actual painting which has survived ?

Near Tun-huang, a town on the Western frontier bordering the desert, the gateway to the West, is a series of shrines hollowed out of the rock, containing numerous frescoes. Some of these are as early as the sixth century ; others, dating from the early part of the T'ang period, about A.D. 700, show a marked advance, especially in the realization of space. These are provincial works. But we can also point to a few paintings belonging to the central tradition of Chinese art.

One of the greatest names of the T'ang period is Yēn Li-pēn. By this master is a roll of The Thirteen Emperors, with attendants, now in the Boston Museum. The slender elegance and long oval faces of the feminine types seen in Ku K'ai-chih's Admonitions are displaced by an ampler and more solid type of figure, with full, round faces, in the attendants on the emperors. And the same change may be seen in some precious fragments of a picture of a Spring Festival, with ladies under branching trees, recovered from the sands of the Central Asian desert—at a site once occupied by a Chinese settlement—painted in bright colours as fresh as if they were a work of yesterday. These fragments are in the new Museum at Delhi.

Boston also possesses a fine copy after Yēn Li-pēn by a Sung artist; Scholars Collating Texts, notable for refinement of atmosphere and mastery of intricate composition. This, like the Thirteen Emperors, belongs to what one may call the Confucian tradition, with its ordered stability, its ripe culture, its mundane wisdom. In the portraits of the Emperors there is also, by contrast with the preceding period, a more virile consciousness of power, a sense of the pride of life.

But the greatest glory of T'ang art was, we cannot doubt, the painting inspired by Buddhism. Belonging to the earlier part of the era are the frescoes in the Horyuji Temple near Nara, in Japan. These, if perhaps by a Korean artist, assuredly represent the Chinese Buddhist style of the seventh century. Serene, grave, remote, the forms of heavenly beings appear upon the four walls of the temple with a kind of stilled grandeur. A certain severity and restraint mark the style; colour is used with reserve; but these are noble examples of the Buddhist art before it was affected by the creative vigour and transforming influence of Wu Tao-tzü.

Buddhism in the course of its long journey out of India and across Central Asia to China and Japan had been completely transformed from the simple ethical teaching of its founder, absorbing probably elements from other religions but also undergoing a process of development and expansion from within. Primitive Buddhism was concerned with the salvation of the individual soul, attaining

enlightenment and casting out desire through its own unaided effort. But now it was the salvation of the whole world (and not human beings only), that was the aim and aspiration of the devout. Sakyā-muni, the historical Buddha, has almost disappeared among other Buddhas ; and besides the various Buddhas are the Bodhisattvas, beings who have earned the bliss of Nirvana but renounce it till the salvation of the world be accomplished.

The central figure in the art of T'ang is Wu Tao-tzū. He was by all accounts the greatest master not only of this period but of all periods of Chinese painting. He lived in the eighth century and was employed at the Court by the emperor Ming Huang, that passionate lover of beauty, patron of poets and painters and musicians, who late in his reign became infatuated with Yang Kuei-fei, a rapacious mistress, with calamitous results.

Wu Tao-tzū painted all kinds of subjects but was specially famous for his Buddhist frescoes. He painted, it is said, 300 frescoes on the walls of temples. He was noted for the astonishing swiftness and sureness of his brush, also for the plastic quality of his forms, which seemed to move in and out of the picture ; they reminded spectators of sculpture. But it is certain that it was not for mere virtuosity that he was ranked so high ; it was his inspired power of imagination, his spiritual force, that impressed as much as the god-like ease with which he swept in his grand forms on vast wall-spaces. The accounts of contemporaries and of later critics who had seen his work make one imagine a great creator endowed with the same sort of tremendous power as Michelangelo, however different the manifestation of that power. But after all we can only conjecture. All the great frescoes have perished. Most of them probably were destroyed at the temporary but violent reaction against Buddhism as a foreign religion which caused persecution and immense destruction in the temples just before the middle of the ninth century. There are a few engravings on stone made after the master's design, hinting at the majesty of his style in various conceptions of Kuan-yin, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, and a few other subjects : there are pictures of later periods which possibly, but none certainly, preserve something of

his design: shadows of shadows, echoes of echoes! But that is all.

We are hardly more fortunate in regard to the other great masters of the period. Among these the most interesting is Wang Wei, who like other Chinese artists was famous both as a painter and as a poet. From rubbings after stone-engravings we can have some dim idea of his scroll-painting of his beloved country-estate. A copy made several centuries later is in the British Museum; it is a softer version, delightful in its way. There are deer-parks, groves and streams, hills and luxuriant valleys, all melting at the close into broad inlets of the sea. Wang Wei, however, was most noted for his impressionist sketches in ink. He originated a new style. Hitherto, landscape had been much associated with map-making. Long scrolls, delineating the features of great tracts of country, were in vogue. The established style was rather formal and decorative; gold was used to enrich the definition of the landscape forms. Wang Wei's style was much more personal and subjective. A few paintings which are preserved in China and which claim to be originals reveal a poetic conception and deep feeling. Wang Wei was especially fond of scenes with fallen snow.

Wang Wei was later regarded as the founder of what is called the Southern School of landscape, as opposed to the drier and more exact Northern School; but these terms have no geographical significance. From him derives that tradition of landscape, suffused with lyrical feeling, which was to bear in the Sung period so rich a fruit.

Among the animal painters Han Kan was eminent, and especially famous for his horses. He had ample opportunities for study in the Imperial stables, which are said to have contained at one time forty thousand horses. Those brought from Ferghana in Central Asia were especially sought after. But the painters like best to paint horses in their freedom on the plains, or with elegant riders on their backs; symbols of wild speed and strength, sensitive and fiery. Paintings of horses, if of any antiquity, tend to gravitate towards the famous name of Han Kan, but there is none which is certainly by the master's hand. Water-buffaloes also were favourite subjects, disporting

themselves among the willows by the sides of streams. And at Peking (lent to the Exhibition at Burlington House) is a beautiful picture of deer in a wood in autumn, ascribed to the end of the period, sensitive in feeling and a most decorative composition.

The fragments of a painting of a Spring Festival, now at Delhi, with ladies under trees, have already been mentioned. In a similar vein are a few works, with ladies and their occupations for theme, which we know from various versions or copies. One is a short roll, "Listening to Music in a Garden," where again the beauty of young trees is associated with the beauty of women; but here the theme, the *listening*, inspires the grouping of the figures and collects them into an inevitable design. For it is not only that we feel the charm of the music in the attitudes of the women, the intervals between them are equally eloquent, and they too seem filled with the floating sound. The same beauty and significance of spacing appear also in the "Ladies Preparing Silk" at Boston, where the figures are more monumental. This picture is said to be by the Sung emperor Hui Tsung, but is surely after a T'ang design. A detail is here reproduced (Pl. II).

Amid so many works which can only be regarded as echoes or reflections of T'ang painting, it is reassuring to find a series of pictures about which no doubt exists. These are a series of five portraits of Saints, preserved at Kyoto. They are mostly in a damaged state, but one at least is in good condition. It is the portrait of an Indian monk, dressed in a black robe, and seated. It is on a fairly large scale. The absolute un-self-consciousness of the saint, absorbed in thought, makes a deep impression, enforced by the simplicity of the design: the figure imposes also by the solidity with which it is presented, though the painter relies almost entirely on the contours. There is a little shading in the dress. This portrait is by a little-known artist, Li Chēn, who worked about the end of the eighth and beginning of the ninth century. Yet as the actual work of a T'ang artist it is the surest clue we have to the painting of the later part of the period. With a certain massiveness, it has a great integrity; and from this work of a minor master we can imagine something

PLATE IV



SILK PAINTING: BIRD ON A BOUGH

SUNG DYNASTY (A.D. 960-1279)

H. 10-2 in.

*British Museum, London  
(Eumorfopoulos Collection)*

[Face p. 16.]



of the power and splendour of the supreme masters of the age.

But we have also the good fortune to be able to study the Buddhist art of the late T'ang period, the ninth and tenth centuries, in a whole series of paintings about which there is no doubt.

We have already mentioned the frescoes still existing at Tun-huang on the Western frontier. But besides the frescoes Tun-huang has also yielded up a mass of Buddhist paintings on silk, which with thousands of MSS. were secreted in a walled-up library about a thousand years ago. In 1908 some hundreds of the paintings were brought to England by Sir Aurel Stein and are now divided between the British Museum and the Delhi Museum. A number of others, left in the cave, were brought by M. Pelliot to Paris and are in the Louvre and other Paris museums. It is a pity that, owing to lack of space, the British Museum cannot show the paintings, which we owe to Sir Aurel Stein's genius for travel and research, with the least adequacy. They are of the greatest importance for the study of Chinese Buddhist art. Some are dated, the earliest date being A.D. 864, and they mostly belong to the latter part of the T'ang Dynasty. The large and splendid embroidery picture of Buddha preaching, with donors below, which hangs on the stairs of the King Edward VII building in the Museum, is thought to date from the eighth century.

The subjects of these paintings are for the most part either Paradise or groups or single figures of Bodhisattvas : there are also small pictures of scenes from the Buddha legend. The conception of Paradise is the same, though varying from a simple to an elaborate form. Pavilions rise from a lotus-lake, surrounding a platform on which a celestial dancer dances to the music of various instruments. The pavilions will be thronged with beautiful beings, over whom an enthroned Buddha presides. Sometimes in the lotus-buds that rise from the water are made visible the baby-forms of souls about to enter this Paradise. The paintings vary much in quality, as in colour-scheme. They are not by master-artists but made probably by monks working in a received tradition. Since the great masterpieces have perished, these are most precious docu-

ments from which we can divine more splendid things. For, with all allowances, the best of the Tun-huang paintings are marvellously successful in evoking a vision of heavenly felicity ; the continuous flowing rhythms of line, the sequences and contrasts of pure colour, build up a music in the mind. The forms are not of the earth, but truly ethereal.

The Bodhisattvas, beings who renounce the bliss that they have earned through successive stages of existence till the salvation of the whole world of living beings be accomplished, stand before us as glowing, gracious presences as they did a thousand years ago before the worshippers, whose portraits as donors are often painted beneath and who looked to them for compassionate mediation as Christians have looked to their great saints.

### THE SUNG DYNASTY

The Sung period is divided into two parts by a great disaster. In A.D. 1127 the Tartars from the North invaded China, seized the capital and carried the emperor Hui Tsung into captivity. Northern China thus passed under Tartar domination. A new capital was chosen in the South, Hang-chow. The period before this event is known as Northern Sung, the period after it as Southern Sung.

Hui Tsung, the ill-fated emperor, was himself a painter and founded an Academy of Painting. Close observation of nature was enjoined on the artists. A besetting weakness of the Chinese has always been a too great dependence on classic models ; and from time to time the need for a fresher and more immediate outlook has led to movements like that associated, in England, with the name of Constable. Not that anything like the naturalism of Europe was sought after ; for selection was with the Chinese instinctive. And indeed nobility of line was insisted on.

The style of Northern Sung in small album-pictures may be studied in the Bird on a Bough in the Eumorfopoulos collection, which has been often reproduced. At first sight it may not notably impress, but the more one becomes intimate with it the more one will appreciate the perfect balance of the design, the sensitiveness of the handling.

The painter "has his eye on the object"; bird and leafy spray are living things; but there is not only fine and just observation; the relation of bird to bough and of both to the enclosing space, and of the painter to what he sees, is profoundly harmonious. The same sense of the living wholeness of nature, pervading whatever glimpse of it the painter has chosen to evoke, may be felt in the "Two Geese" in the British Museum, which is in the style of this period. Though the subject is of the simplest, and though it seems as if the painter had wholly concentrated on the representation of the birds floating on the water, yet the picture has a kind of grandeur and seems to have an import far beyond that of the ostensible subject; it breathes indeed of the eternal mystery of life; and here again is that beautiful equilibrium between the claims of style and the claims of nature. In Japanese collections are paintings of flowers belonging to this period, notably a pair of paintings of Lotuses, in which we are made aware of an attitude of mind quite different from that which isolates a flower to dwell upon its particular beauty of form and colour; the flower is an expression of the universal life; it is, one might say, a spirit, and not less significant for the painter than the form of a human being.

It is, of course, in landscape that this feeling for nature, an apprehension of the universe, which has a close affinity with that we find in Wordsworth's poetry, attains its fullest expression.

The greatest landscape painter of Northern Sung is Kuo Hsi, examples of whose brush will be seen at Burlington House. Some notes and sayings of this master were preserved by his son, who added comments of his own. They afford an insight into the Chinese conception of landscape art which is of great interest. A translation is given in Dr. Sirén's "Early Chinese Painting". The love of landscape, we are told, arises from the instinctive desire of men to be free of the fetters of care and routine and to seek among the hills and streams that which is refreshing and congenial to man's original nature. But to those who approach the woods and streams with proud eyes of condescension they will not yield their secret, they will appear insignificant. Only he can paint them who enters into

their heart. Landscapes must be viewed from some distance, so that the grand unity controlling the multiplicity of form may be grasped by the mind. The best landscapes are those one can not only look at but wander in ; the best of all are those which one can live in. There are criticisms of current faults in painting ; the main faults springing from superficiality of vision and corresponding slackness of brush work. Kuo Hsi himself, his son says, when he sat down to paint before a bright window, was careful to remove all distractions from his mind : he burnt incense right and left, washed his hands, took a fine brush and the choicest ink, "let the thoughts settle in his soul" and set to work. Till the work was finished, it was like battling with a relentless enemy. The emphasis is always on the mental activity and concentration required of the artist.

Another leader of the landscape school of Northern Sung is Tung Yüan. A grand example of his brush is lent by the Chinese Government to the Exhibition at Burlington House : there is also a beautiful roll in the Museum.

Two other masters of this period stand somewhat apart : Mi Fei and Su Tung-p'o. Mi Fei was a passionate collector of old painting and calligraphy ; his collection was famous, though shown to few. He painted conical peaks rising among mists and similar motives in very personal style. His friend Su Tung-p'o was especially fond of painting bamboos ; symbol of the fine character which bends under storms but does not break. In these ink-painters painting and writing are intimately associated.

Li Lung-mien, though the most renowned of all the Sung masters, seems to owe his eminence in Chinese esteem less to his actual works than to his being an exemplar of the ideal qualities of the scholarly, cultured gentleman. He is said to have had a passion in his youth for painting horses, but being rebuked by a Buddhist priest he took to religious themes. His characteristic style is in a fine line without colour ; but very little survives that can claim to be his original work. He spent much time in copying old masterpieces. Even the greatest masters did not think this beneath their dignity ; but, as a rule, it would seem that their "copies" were reproductions into which they

infused their own spirit, as when Rubens copied Mantegna, or Watteau Rubens. Tradition long associated with the name of Li Lung-mien sets of pictures of the Arhats (Lohan in Chinese), the immediate disciples of Buddha, preserved in Japan and in Boston; and though not actually by the master, they may be of his school or derive from his example.

The Buddhist tradition in wall-painting which had flourished so greatly in the T'ang Dynasty was still continued. The large fresco of Three Bodhisattvas in the British Museum shows the grandeur of that tradition modified to a greater suavity, with a certain loss no doubt of inner force. The three colossal forms, massive as they are, seem to float like apparitions before the eye; a gentle wind seems to sway the long scarves of their robes. Still vaster frescoes in the University Museum at Philadelphia, altogether harder in style, are of yet later date, but probably derive from T'ang design. But the Buddhist painting of the Sung period chose to dwell less on the figures of Bodhisattvas than on the Arhats. Sometimes the Sixteen Arhats would be pictured together; more often they were portrayed singly in attitudes of intense contemplation or performing miraculous acts. Still more characteristic of Sung art is the way in which a particular sect of Buddhism, the sect for which the Japanese form of the name, Zen, is generally used, came to suffuse with its inspiration even the art of landscape and of themes akin to landscape. The Zen teachers regarded sacred images, ceremonies, good works, and even the scriptures, as valueless in themselves. Each individual was to find Buddha in his own soul. They were brusque and enigmatic, and liked to teach by wordless communication. Unlike the Puritan iconoclasts of Europe, they were by no means averse to art; they practised painting as a means of expression without words. They relied on the hint or suggestion given by a spray of leaves or misty vacancy of lakes and streams among the hills. Zen appealed to that side of the Chinese nature which is represented by the sage Lao-tzü, who dwelt on the power of emptiness and weakness, on the virtue of flowing rather than striving, and who expressed himself in bold paradoxes. It seems indeed to be a coalescence of Zen and of Taoism which is behind the

landscape art of Sung. And it is in the landscape of Southern Sung, the later half of the period, that this spirit is most completely shown.

Hang Chow, the capital of Southern Sung, was a city of extraordinary beauty and splendour. There is a vivid and enthusiastic description of it in the *Book of Marco Polo*, though it had passed into the hands of the Mongols when Polo visited it. No city in Europe could rival its amenities. It lay along the shores of a lake, and was intersected by canals, crossed by thousands of stone bridges. A soft and luminous atmosphere bathed the surrounding landscape. But what struck Polo as specially remarkable was the amiability and gentle manners of the inhabitants, who wore no weapons and kept none in their houses: he notes too their cordial welcome of strangers.

Though there were many who could not forget the national humiliation in the loss of the Northern provinces, here in this beautiful city artists, poets and philosophers found consolation and contentment. The Academy was reconstituted and certain of the older painters who had worked at the court of Hui Tsung made their way to Hang-chow, while a new generation sprang up to give fresh glory to the age.

Happily we have now arrived at a period when it is possible to point to more than rare relics and to derivative versions of lost originals. Enough remains of the art of Southern Sung to assure us that in landscape at least no other school in the world has surpassed it. Among the pictures which have survived are examples of the long roll portraying historical scenes; small album pictures of flowering sprays or fruit, exquisite in their simplicity and truth; paintings of dogs and cats; of water-buffaloes and herdsmen; ladies in their boudoirs; pedlars of toys with children. But it is the landscape art above all that demands our attention.

First we may note that all that type of landscape of which Europe and Holland especially has been profuse, namely the portraiture of an actual place or scene, is absent, or almost absent. It is true that we find as favourite themes a set of Eight Views around Lake Tung-t'ing; but there is no emphasis on locality. The "Views" are rather landscape

motives ; Vesper Bell from a Distant Temple, Fine Weather after Storm at a lonely mountain town, Autumn Moon over the Lake, Homeward-bound Boats, Wild Geese alighting on a sandy plain, Night Rain : titles like these suffice to show the kind of motives preferred and the freedom accorded to the artist.

Colour again is absent or subdued. To suggest rather than to display is always the Chinese preference ; and Chinese critics claim that in the hands of a master ink can give a perfect suggestion of colour. Moreover, the aim of these painters was to communicate the strong impress of a single mood ; and any emphasis on the local colours of a landscape tended to weaken that impress.

Lakes and mountains, with torrents, mists, rocks and forest trees, form the staple elements of Chinese landscape. Indeed, the word for landscape in Chinese is "mountain and water picture". The forms of the mountains may sometimes seem fantastic and unreal, but have their counterparts in the actual scenery of the country. The strange rock-pinnacles emerging from the mists of river-gorges were the delight of many a painter. In the Sung landscapes melting distances of luminous haze contrast with abrupt and jagged forms of rock. But it is not merely the landscape design that absorbs the painter ; he gives us also his own mood in contemplating it. Sometimes the scene is empty of human beings ; more often there are figures in it, perhaps at first sight unnoticed—travellers on the hills, poets seated in pavilions among the woods, sages admiring the moon or a waterfall, fishermen in their boats among the reed-beds. Yet the prevailing impression is of solitariness ; a solitariness in which there is nothing dismaying or alien. Towering peaks and vast prospects, which in Europe the human mind so long regarded with aversion as barren and unprofitable to human needs, become a source of exalted feeling, akin to what Wordsworth experienced in the Alps on the passage of the Simplon when he felt that the woods, the winds, the torrents, the rocks,

The unfettered clouds and region of the heavens,  
Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light  
Were all like workings of one mind, the features  
Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree,

though there is a difference of mood, which is more solemn in the English poet : in the Chinese painters there is more of exhilaration.

The two greatest masters of landscape were Hsia Kuei and Ma Yüan. Hsia Kuei is the author of a long roll lent to the Exhibition called "The River of Ten Thousand Li." Such a subject is only capable of treatment in this peculiar form, but it lends itself admirably to the Chinese brush, following the movement of the river as it pours swiftly along or is fretted by the obstacles of rocks. Another roll in the Freer Gallery at Washington is of mountain scenery. But there are also fine hanging pictures by Hsia Kuei, characterized by virile grasp of structure as well as by lofty mood. Indeed, quite apart from the profound feeling with which the masterpieces of Southern Sung are inspired, one is astonished by the mental grasp and the easy control of complex elements, still preserving a freshness of touch and energy of stroke in every detail. This could only have been possible when the artists inherited all the secrets of a long tradition ; their strength was not dissipated in wrestling with problems of representation, for a system of conventions had been built up which enabled these problems to be overcome and left the painter free to infuse his own spirit into his work and enliven it with his own personal touch.

This fusion of the scene depicted with the inner emotion of the painter is seen at its most perfect in the work of Ma Yüan. Using both line and tone, he was a firm and convincing delineator of structure. Something in the rugged grandeur of great pine-trees especially appealed to him. Now a single huge trunk will dominate the design, now the black branches will spread abroad their fantastic forks and sprays above a contemplative sage. In one of his finest pictures a group of storm-frayed pines crowns a crag jutting out into a river, and rocky pinnacles towering beyond repeat their upright lines. But he is equally masterly in delineating the supple and drooping branches of willows on a hazy morning. And there is intimacy, too, in his picture of a solitary angler in a boat on a smoothly rippling stream. A landscape in the Eumorfopoulos collection has been ascribed to him, and is certainly in his style : here again is a sage in a boat on a lake beneath the shadow of a great crag. In the

PLATE V



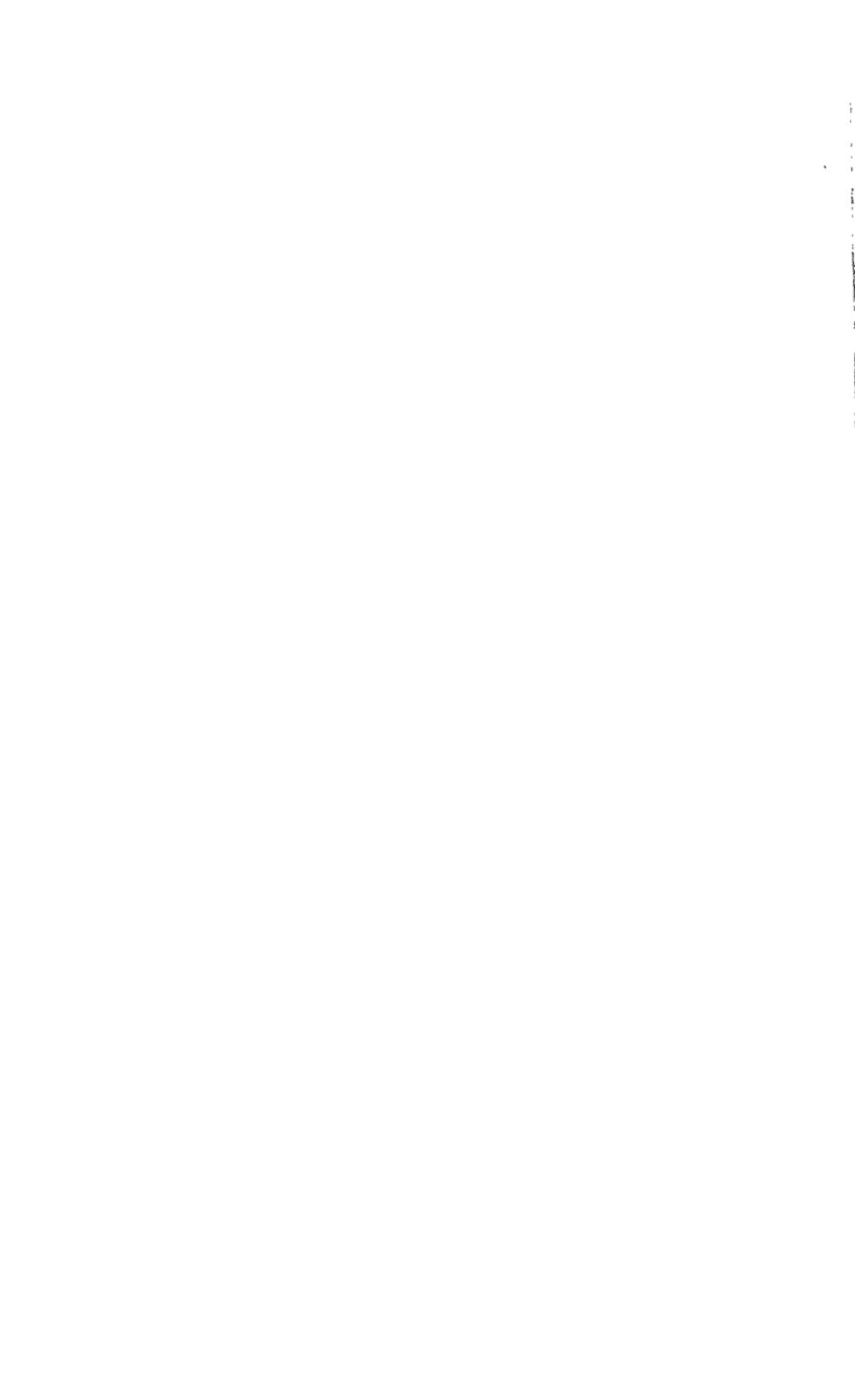
FRESCO: PORTRAIT OF A PRIEST

13TH CENTURY OR LATER

H. about 16 in.

*British Museum, London*

[*Face p. 24.*



Freer collection is a magnificent roll in which every motive of the Chinese landscapist is taken up in a sequence of related or contrasted themes.

Ma Yüan came of a family of painters, of whom he was the most gifted. The elements in this landscape art of Sung are permanent and universal. It is the complete antithesis to the kind of later Chinese art which for so long stood in the popular conception for all Chinese art—pretty, fanciful, exquisite in variegated colour. And it expresses a conception of the universe, a vision of its wholeness, a liberation from the struggle for existence which subordinates everything to human interests and prejudices, a going-out of the spirit into the solitudes unafraid and exulting, such as Europe realized only after centuries, painfully and through the lessons of science.

### THE YÜAN DYNASTY

In 1260 the Mongols became masters of China and remained in power till 1368 when they were driven out and the native Ming Dynasty was established. Painting continued the Sung tradition, with a certain difference. Hunting scenes, in which the Mongols took great pleasure, became a favourite theme. Hundreds of pictures in which horses and horsemen play a part are attributed to Chao Mēng-fu, one of the most famous names of the period, but very few of these are likely to be originals. Another celebrated artist is Jēn-jēn-fa, by whom there is a picture of Grooms Feeding Horses, now in the Eumorfopoulos collection. Landscapes of the period are only less fine than those of Southern Sung. The delicate and tender landscapes of Ni Tsan, sometimes reminding one of sepia drawings by Claude, deserve a mention. In the work of Yen Hui, who painted especially Taoist sages and worthies of the Zen sect of Buddhism, there is a certain wildness which makes itself felt in the stormy brushwork. Attributed to him is a romantic picture in the British Museum of Three Sages burning incense in a recess of the mountains. Also in the British Museum is the portrait in fresco of a Priest holding a censer, reproduced on Plate V, which may be of this period or possibly of the early Ming era. It is a good example of

Chinese portraiture, giving more than the external features and finely sensitive in drawing. It is a fragment, no doubt, of a large religious wall-painting. Probably if we could see the figures of heavenly beings for whom this priest is a ministrant, we should find them lacking in the expression of spiritual power as compared with earlier frescoes. But just as in Italy and other European countries painters of post-Renaissance times who were merely rhetorical in their religious compositions could paint admirable portraits, so it may be here.

Another famous and much imitated master is Ch'ien Hsüan. In a Japanese private collection is an exquisite painting by him, sometimes called The Flute Player, though it is a portrait of a prince, with a flute stuck in his belt. The youthful figure, seen in profile, is clothed in a light-red dress with a belt of greenish blue. In its purity of line and simplicity of presentation, this is one of the loveliest of Chinese paintings ; but Ch'ien Hsüan also painted still-life, and flowers and birds, with great distinction. An early copy after an interesting roll of his, a lady being escorted to the camp of the Tartars, is in the British Museum.

### THE MING DYNASTY

If no paintings had survived earlier than the fourteenth century we should rank the Ming period as a great period for art. It has indeed many claims on our admiration ; it is vigorous and various ; it can show not only many a masterpiece of decorative design and rich yet fastidious colour, but splendid ink-paintings also, especially in the earlier part of the period. It is only when we have in mind the grandeur of the T'ang style or the lofty mood of Sung that the Ming achievement sinks to a secondary place.

Painting in China had already more than a thousand years of continuous productiveness behind it when the Ming epoch began. The wonder is that it could still show such an abundance of vitality. In Europe, besides the desire to express emotion in terms of forms and colour, there has always been the Western scientific bent, the zest for exploration ; and the complex problems involved in the aim of

presenting a scene completely in its envelope of light and atmosphere proved an unceasing stimulus to painters till the close of the nineteenth century. Chinese painting was much more restricted in its aims ; it remained, it still remains, true to its traditional conventions ; it still worked within chosen limits. Nor was there, as with us, a premium upon novelty : on the contrary, to "transmit the classics" by modelling a work on an ancient masterpiece, with whatever personal difference, was accounted a virtue. Nevertheless, freshness if not novelty was prized ; the freshness, that is, of the personal touch, the sincere approach, the quality of life in every stroke of the brush.

In the early part of the period Lin Liang is reputed the greatest master. He painted chiefly in ink. A fine example of his work, "Wild Geese by a Mountain Stream", is in the British Museum. It is painted with as consummate a mastery as any of the Sung landscapes. Yet we miss the indefinable something that comes from the artist's innermost mind and feeling, giving it significance, communicating through the aspect of a definite scene a sense of "something far more deeply interfused".

Wu Wei is said to have modelled his style on the great T'ang master Wu Tao-tzǔ. The British Museum has a beautiful picture by him of a "Fairy with a Phoenix" admirable in its fluent force of brush no less than in a largeness and dignity of portrayal. He too belongs to the earlier part of the period. More typical of the Ming character are the two very popular painters Chiu Ying and T'ang-yin, who are rather later in date. The pictures ascribed to these painters are countless, but few of them have a claim to be originals. Both were noted for pictures of ladies, court ceremonies, dancers and musicians ; sometimes scenes from the history of former times and sometimes actually copied from ancient paintings. In such pictures the colour was a principal charm. Colour too, always refined and used in clear full notes contrasted with the silence of neutral tones, becomes customary in the large, extremely decorative pictures of flowering trees and birds. The lovely surface of things meets the surface of the mind. The deeper emotions sleep in its recesses. Of the later Ming art the well-known "Earthly Paradise" in the British Museum,

unusual in the largeness of its scale, is a good example. The delightful composition with its floating figures dropping flowers on the group of happy beings arriving in a boat breathes the atmosphere of the Taoist fairy-land. But side by side with the sumptuous ornateness especially associated with Ming painting we find abundant examples of what is called the Southern School of landscape, claiming descent from the eighth-century master Wang Wei ; this school preferred the ink-painting in impressionist style ; and though apt to be steeped in associations with poetry which are lost for a Western public, the fluent if rather tenuous grace of these landscape compositions have sometimes a real charm. We find also in certain painters a revolt against the calligraphic line which plays so strong a part in the Chinese tradition of painting ; the brusque touch, a defiant contempt for the smooth stroke, a deliberate looseness, are preferred.

The curious thing to note is that, so far as inner feeling is concerned, the farther we get from the art of Sung times the less modern, not the more modern, the art becomes. Or rather, since the word modern has ambiguous uses, we may say that the art becomes less universal, more Chinese ; easier perhaps to enjoy from the outside, since everybody enjoys the charm of decorative design and harmonious colour, but not intimately eloquent of what is, for us in Europe, a modern view of the universe and man's place in it ; and it is this which makes the master works of Sung landscape contemporary, so to speak, with ourselves.

To the close of the Ming period belong the earliest Chinese colour-prints known to us ; they are illustrations to a drawing-book. The wood-cut was invented by the Chinese long before it was employed in Europe : one dated A.D. 868, among a number of others, was found at Tun-huang by Sir Aurel Stein and is in the British Museum. And it is quite possible colour-printing was practised before Ming times, though we do not know of any till the seventeenth century. The British Museum has a very interesting collection of Chinese colour-prints, now very rare ; some of them have a full range of colour. The Chinese preceded the Japanese in this art, but there was no school of artists, as in Japan, devoted to designing for the colour-print. The

coloured wood-cut was used almost entirely as a means of reproducing paintings already in existence; and though some cheap broadsides have survived, they are quite inferior, as art, to the beautiful Japanese colour-prints.

### THE MANCHU DYNASTY

In 1644 the Ming Dynasty came to an end. The Manchu Tartars, called in to help suppress a rebellion, seized their opportunity and became masters of China. The Manchu Dynasty lasted till 1911, when the Chinese Republic took its place.

Under the Manchus painting continued to flourish; but the tendencies increasingly perceptible in Ming painting became more decided. That is, while technical skill was in no way abated, art became more external, engaging less of the artist's whole nature. It was the painting of the late seventeenth and of the eighteenth centuries which, translated on porcelain or silks, gave to Europe its notion of what Chinese art consisted in; dainty colour, in delicate harmonies, animated and free-flowing design, airy and graceful fancy. As we know, Europe was charmed with Chinoiserie. European art had no such attraction for the Chinese. The Jesuits introduced European paintings, but the Chinese found them difficult to understand. It is interesting to note that the representation of shadow puzzled them completely. When shown a portrait painted in the European convention of the day with one side of the face in strong shadow, 'Do you then, they asked, wash only one side of your faces?' It was as if their own ignoring of the cast shadow in painting was so instinctive in them that they simply did not see shadows in nature. The oil medium also no doubt seemed heavy and unpleasing. One of the Jesuit missionaries, Castiglione, learnt the Chinese style very successfully, and pictures by him, signed with the Chinese art-name he adopted, are much esteemed. Two are in the Exhibition. More and more time was given to copying old masters; but there was plenty of original work and many painters, whom we should probably appreciate more if Western collectors had not determined that nothing later than the Ming or even the Sung period, was good enough for them.

Also we know very little about these artists as yet, for the same reason that attention has been concentrated on the art of earlier centuries. At the beginning of the Manchu period four painters of the name of Wang were in high repute. An ink landscape by one of these is in the Eumorfopoulos collection. A special development of the Southern School was what is known as the Literary Man's painting ; landscape, flowers, etc., were handled with a light, loose touch, as if the artist's aim was less to realize what was before his eye than to evoke the intangible pleasure of a moment, with the perfume of its associations. Sometimes an appearance of weakness or incoherence would be deliberately cultivated. Another fashion was the 'finger-painting' in which the finger was used instead of the brush, with an effect of rich blotting. Examples are in the British Museum collection. Various virtuosites were no doubt a natural pursuit at this stage of such an immensely long and sustained tradition. But in spite of what we cannot but feel is a general decline the Manchu period can show numberless paintings capable of giving great pleasure. The technical skill never fails, and sometimes we find together with that skill a reminder of the sensitiveness and seriousness of earlier and greater days.

Nor even now has this majestic tradition, continued through so many centuries, come to an end. Recent exhibitions in London and other European capitals have shown that in the present century something like a renaissance has taken place and that there are living Chinese painters worthy to stand beside the masters of the past.

## SCULPTURE AND LACQUER

*by*

LEIGH ASHTON

THERE has never been any appreciation in China of the Sculptor's Art. Hardly any serious recognizance of the objects themselves was made before the eighteenth century, and even then it was probably more the association of history and the antiquity of inscriptions which interested the connoisseur. This is surprising in a country where the knowledge and cultivation of art has always been one of the essential parts of educated life. But this lack of appreciation becomes more obvious if one considers the small part played by the human figure in Chinese sculpture. With the exception of the group of earthenware statuettes used in the burial rites of the Han and T'ang Dynasties, in which a lively naturalism is shown akin to that of the Tanagra figurines of Ancient Greece, the figure sculpture of China is confined to religious subjects in which, for the most part, the conception depends for emotional effect on facial expression and the drapery follows a stylistic or conventional pattern and is divorced from any close relationship with the body, while in the body itself naturalistic modelling is conspicuously absent. There is nothing in Chinese art to compare with the admirable portrait statues of the Japanese mediaeval sculptors, but if in the representation of the human form the Chinese canons are noticeably different from European, in their animal sculpture they can be readily appreciated. Here form, whether naturalistic or stylized, is far closer to European standards and the beauty of many of these animal conceptions has a sculptural value far in excess of the best of the religious figures.

The materials used in China were various. Stone or

marble were the most popular, the former generally a variety of limestone, the latter, as a rule, of a white crystalline quality. In the case of religious figures colouring was generally applied either in the form of a direct pigment or in one applied over a thin coating of gesso. Wood was also much used and sandalwood seems to have been one of the most popular kinds. Here again colouring or gilding was usually employed, for the most part over a gesso foundation. Bronze was much used for small subjects, in the case of animals often enriched with inlay of precious metals, in the case of small votive figures, gilded all over. Iron seems to have been generally used also, more particularly, no doubt for less expensive projects, for sculpture to be shown out of doors, in courts or gardens. Lacquer was very popular during the T'ang Dynasty (A.D. 618-906) when a particular kind, known in Japan as *kanshitsu* or dry lacquer, was widely employed; the process consisted of soaking vegetable fibre in a lacquer solution, modelling it to the form required and leaving it to dry, when a hard, light, medium was achieved capable of painting or gilding in addition to the usual polish. Jade and other semi-precious stones were also used for smaller types of sculpture.

We have very few works of art which we can call sculpture before the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220). A few animal-shaped bronzes, such as the celebrated owl from the Eumorfopoulos collection of the Chou Dynasty, or the clambering dragon of the period of the Warring States in the Stoclet collection show an aptitude for naturalistic representation combined with an adaptability to the uses of the vessel which mark them out, while in a few pieces, such as the bronze elephant in the Camondo collection, a monumental simplicity adds an element of the grand manner which is as a rule absent. On some pieces human figures appear and in a well-known vessel in the Sumitomo collection in the form of a monster swallowing a man, the curious form of face is noticeable for its affinities to the type of the ancient South American cultures. The complex geometric designs with which so many of these bronze vessels are ornamented may possibly be connected with Polynesian decorative ornament—a fact which recent finds in the dunes near Hong-Kong seems to establish—and it may be that a long-

PLATE VI



TOMB DOOR SLAB : STONE  
HAN DYNASTY : 2ND CENTURY A.D.  
W. 42 in.

*Louvre, Paris*

[Face p. 32.]



discredited theory of a chain of cultures across the Pacific may eventually prove true; but if so the Chinese is likely to be the oldest.

The Han Dynasty (206 B.C.—A.D. 220) is the first dynasty of which we possess a considerable corpus of sculptural material and of this the most characteristic group in some ways is the series of bas-reliefs found in tombs (cf. Pl. VI). The main body of these reliefs is to be found in the Wu Liang tombs in Shantung and consist of two series dated A.D. 129 and A.D. 147-9. It is generally accepted that these reliefs are based on paintings, probably on historical frescoes such as existed in the Ling-Kuang palace of that date. The better class of these reliefs are executed in a technique in which the figures are cut smooth and polished, the outlines and details being incised, while the ground is left rough; a few are treated in a more ordinary way with the scenes carved in low relief raised on the surface.

There is a simplicity about these Han reliefs which is attractive. Treated in a purely linear manner the outline is often irreproachably drawn, while the liveliness and movement of the figures is remarkable. The conventionalization such as the delineation of rank by size point to a fixed type of design, but in the execution of this design the artist has achieved an individuality, which marks the group as something apart. In addition to these reliefs we also possess a certain amount of sculpture in the round. The monument of General Ho K'iu ping (dated 119 B.C.) with its group of a horse trampling on a barbarian and the figure of a winged tiger at Yachou in Szechuan, while lacking somewhat the vitality that can be observed in the smaller sculpture of the period show that the artists were well able to deal with animal groups in the round, while the carvings in high relief on the pillars of Ch'en at Chü hsien in Szechuan, with their lively animal subjects and hunting scenes show clearly an aptitude not merely for decoration, but for the use of sculpture in combination with architecture, which is remarkable. Animal sculpture indeed in the Han Dynasty reached a very high level. It is characterized by a tendency to elongate the forms, a tendency no doubt derived from contact with the West—such forms are common enough in Graeco-Bactrian art and probably repre-

sent an Iranian element—an effect of suppressed nervous energy and a feeling for movement, which are first-rate. The feeling is accentuated by the use of a convention often known as the "flying gallop", by which an animal in movement is shown with all four feet outstretched, a position into which it does not get in nature. By contrast an entirely opposite and extremely stylized exists side by side with the naturalistic, used mainly in jade carvings. Here a human form is reduced to three triangles, a pig to a cylinder, and by a few deft incisions the contour or expression is perfectly conveyed. This ability to express his conception in naturalistic or abstract terms with equal ease is a curious comment on the art of the Han sculptor, but as we possess no criticisms of the period, we cannot say whether the same rivalry reigned between the Academic and the Extremist as it does to-day.

Tradition has associated the introduction of Buddhism into China with a dream of the Emperor Ming Ti, who in A.D. 68 saw in his sleep a golden man fly into the palace and on its being suggested that it was an image of Buddha, sent to India and was converted. In actual point of fact it is uncertain when the first propaganda penetrated its way, but while by A.D. 148 Wu An-shih Kao, a prince of Parthia, was established at Lo-yang translating Sutras, it is hardly before the fourth century, when Chinese were admitted to the Buddhist clergy, that the religion had taken sufficient hold on the imagination of the people to be taken notice of. From that time onwards it swept all before it and became the popular religion of China. To its inception we owe practically all the figure-sculpture which now exists, with the exception of the terracotta tomb figures, consideration of which is more fitly to be taken under the heading of ceramics than of sculpture. They are largely cast from moulds and therefore do not, strictly speaking, come under the designation of sculpture proper.

This figure sculpture was the direct outcome of the success of the Mahayana creed, a development of the original Buddhist vehicle, the Hinayana, with its somewhat hopeless ultimate goal of Eternal Oblivion. Under the newer tenets appeared the certainty of rebirth in a Paradise by faith in one of the many manifestations of the Buddha.

These Paradises were ruled over by the great saints of the Mahayanist Canon, such as Maitreya, the God of Love, Amida, the ruler of the Western Paradise, Avalokitesvara, the God of Mercy, later to be absorbed with Kuan-yin, the Chinese Goddess of the same power. This creed, with its myriad saints, provided the sculptor with an opportunity for figure representation which he had hitherto lacked, and the result was a spate of rock-cut temples, gilt-bronze votive shrines, stone, wood and iron images and great stone votive stele.

At the time of this efflorescence of Buddhism the greater part of China was under the rule of the Wei Tartars, a barbarian tribe who, coming from the region of Lake Baikal, had conquered the whole of the North. The Wei Tartars seem to have had an interest in sculpture. No girl could become an empress without first casting a statue, and all male aspirants to the throne had to follow the same rule. Thus the emperor Tao Wu's wife, Madam Mou-Jang, was chosen empress because her casting was a success, but Madam Lui and Madam Yao never attained the full rank because their efforts did not set properly. It is under the Wei Tartars that was carved the first of the great groups of rock-cut images which provide the cardinal points for our dating of early Buddhist sculpture. These are in the gorge of Yün-kang at T'a Tung-fu in Shansi. Begun about A.D. 460 they contain inscriptions down to A.D. 495, but seem to have had additional figures carved at a later date; in the type of figure produced they show the influence of the Gandhāran and Mathūra School of Indian sculpture, though in no particularly marked degree. The Wei Tartars removed in A.D. 439, 30,000 families from Tun-huang, a Buddhist centre, to their capital P'in Ch'eng. These families probably exercised considerable influence on the stylistic development, but while it is possible that the Yün-kang figures represent a Central Asian type, it seems equally likely that it is the indigenous Chinese pattern they follow, as the Wei Tartars were fanatic absorbers of Chinese models and institutions, adopting Chinese names and customs as fast as they could.

The robes are carved in many parallel folds and at the sides or at the bottom are treated in elaborate pleated

designs. The bodies are angular and drawn out, with square high heads and long necks, the eyes treated as slits with or without pupils, the mouth fixed in a smile. There is very little attempt at modelling in the body, which is really treated as a core on which the robe is placed, while the folds of that robe are often treated in a purely decorative manner. But the methods by which these folds are marked show a feeling for rhythm which is quite exceptional, and though the scheme may often be arbitrarily conventional the sculptor brings to the execution of this convention a vitality and strength which compensate for the crudeness of technique, which is so often apparent. The type is distinctly Chinese and the aspect of remote severity which is characteristic of the majority of the figures is characteristic of a period in which the primitive aspect of the deity is the prevailing vision.

With the sixth century this rigidity begins to lose ground. Forms begin to be humanized, and the benevolence of a familiar saint takes the place of the more awful power. The great series of caves at Lung-mēn in the province of Honan are probably the most celebrated of all the rock-cut temples of China. The carvings range in date from A.D. 495 to the middle of the eighth century, and comprise every variety of the iconographical canon. The frequent representation of the Buddha with an attendant Bodhisattva on either side has a curious resemblance in Western eyes to the Trinity. It is in the sixth century that the influence of Indian sculpture of the Mathūra and Gupta Schools makes its power more strongly felt. Through the latter part of the Wei Dynasty and in the short period of the Sui (A.D. 581-617) in which China was once more united North and South, the effect of the Indian type is more clearly noticeable. The broad calm faces, the rapt expression, the tall figures, the trailing scarves over arm or from the waist, the elaborate pleats of skirt or cloak, the heavy tiaras, ear-rings and long swinging chains are all derived from Indian sources, and a brief examination of the celebrated frescoes at Ajanta will show how close an affinity this is.

Besides the cave-sculpture there exist a number of votive steles, some of great beauty. The form is of a vertical

PLATE VII



GILT-BRONZE VOTIVE GROUP: THE DIVINE  
CONVERSATION

DATED A.D. 518  
H. 9 in.

*Louvre, Paris*

[Face p. 36.



rectangular slab, tapering as a rule to the top, which is sometimes carved with an intricate design of coiled dragons. The front of the slab is carved with scenes from the life of Buddha in horizontal registers, the central portion being occupied as a rule by a larger and more heavily-carved Trinity-group. The whole is carved in fairly deep relief whereas the back of the stele on which usually appears the votive inscription may be carved with further scenes or with figures of donors in the lowest possible relief or even merely incised. It seems plain that the donors and the sculptor were not going to waste their time and money in elaborate technique where it would not be seen. These votive slabs are of all sizes and the majority of them bear dates. From these it seems clear that while popular in the fifth and sixth centuries, during the T'ang Dynasty (A.D. 618-906), they went out of fashion. The same cannot be said of the small gilt-bronze votive statuettes, many of them also inscribed and dated, which continued to be made throughout that period. In the fifth and sixth centuries they were exceedingly common and many are of very high quality. The beauty of these delicately-cast figures, sitting or standing, often in front of a long mandorla, is enhanced by the pale tone of the gilding. Outstanding examples of these smaller statuettes are the gilt-bronze Prabhutaratna and Sakya-muni, formerly in the Peytel collection and now in the Louvre, dated A.D. 518 (cf. Pl. V), and the celebrated Altar-piece of ungilded bronze formerly belonging to the Viceroy Tuan Fang dated A.D. 593, the main part of which is at Boston in the Museum of Fine Arts and the accessory figures in the Rutherford collection. A certain amount of Taoist sculpture exists of this period, but of such poor quality as to make it not worth consideration. The Taoist religion, which was originally philosophical and mystical, had become by a process of popularization one of magic, sacrifices, etc., and images of Lao Tzü, the founder, or of T'ien Tsun, the Lord of Heaven, were made. The immense vogue of Buddhism was a thorn in the flesh of the Taoists, who began to produce sculpture with imitations of Buddhist types in such quantities that in A.D. 570 an address to the throne was made on the subject by one Chen Huan. Taoism regained a large amount of its popularity during the T'ang

Dynasty, possibly owing to the fact that the family name of the founder of the T'ang Dynasty was the same as that of Lao tzü and it was made the official religion, but the quality of its sculpture does not seem to have increased.

Mention must be made of the splendid series of animals standing in front of the Royal Tombs of the Liang Dynasty (A.D. 502-57) outside Nanking. The series consists of rows of winged lions of monumental size, their heads thrown back, their chests bulging, their tongues hanging out. The sense of latent power is vividly achieved, and the whole conception, while static, never gives the impression of heaviness, which might be expected in so bulky a mass.

With the T'ang Dynasty (A.D. 618-906) the gradual loosening of the rigidity, which we have seen occurring during the sixth century, becomes an accomplished fact. The types of deity have become fixed, and we find a more individual conception of the sculptor being allowed to take shape. The drapery tends to follow a more natural formula, the robe moulds itself to a limb and does not follow an arbitrary decorative convention, while during the latter part of the dynasty a real attempt at modelling in the body may be found. At the beginning of the reign there is very little change, and indeed with the adoption of Taoism as the official religion Buddhism may have taken a slight rebuff, but with the return of the celebrated pilgrim Hsüan Tsang in A.D. 645 with a group of copies of famous Indian images its popularity continued unabated. The principal group of rock-cut sculptures are still those at Lung-mén, and the great Buddha of the Pin-yang grotto is the outstanding example of T'ang religious sculpture. This colossal figure, which is about fifty feet high, is seated cross-legged on a dais in an attitude of repose. The calm expression, the simple flowing robes with their long parallel folds curving across the body emphasize the conception of peace which the sculptor has set out to attain. The complete reconciliation of human and divine aspect has been achieved with the utmost ease and Buddhist sculpture at this date—inscriptions place the carving of the main figure and its attendant disciples at about A.D. 672-5—has attained an understanding of the presentation of religious emotion, which in some respects has no rival. Towards the close of the T'ang

Dynasty a further breaking down of the set principles took place, and we find figures which have abandoned the customary frontal pose and bend at the hips, turn to the side, cant the head and occasionally are represented in movement. This tendency towards the "baroque", if we may call it by such a term, is still further accentuated under the Sung (A.D. 960-1279) and later dynasties. For in A.D. 845 Buddhism suffered a terrible persecution under the emperor Wu Tsung when 45,000 temples were destroyed and 275,000 priests and nuns secularized. The ardour for image-making was no doubt cooled for a time, and though it revived, the characteristics had begun to change.

A quantity of admirable animal-sculpture was produced under the T'ang Dynasty. The majority of this sculpture is realistic, and the distinguishing characteristic of each animal has obviously engaged the attention of the artist. Thus, while the domestic animals such as the dog or ox show that tameness of spirit which is the mark of the household, the tiger or lion has all the ferocity of the wild. At the same time it is not merely the spirit of the individual animal which has been captured in any slavish copying, but the essential spirit of the whole class. It is in particular in the smaller groups, the admirable marble of a tiger devouring a hare in the Louvre or the snarling lion in the Eumorfopoulos collection, that the sculptural quality of the T'ang animal conception comes out strongest. But many of the monumental pieces are equally good. The great winged horse from the tomb of Kao Tsung at Ch'ien Chou, dated A.D. 603, is magnificent with flowing mane and head tossed back, his wings chiselled into a pattern of curling fronds. Equally splendid are the celebrated panels from the tomb of the Emperor T'ai Tsung, founder of the T'ang Dynasty, now in the University Museum of Philadelphia. The slabs are carved with representations of the Emperor's six favourite chargers from designs by the great painter Yen Li-pēn. Admirably spaced and simple in execution, the panels are carved in relief, set back in the solid block, and can be fitly held up as masterpieces of an art at which the T'ang sculptors were outstanding, that of animal sculpture.

With the Sung Dynasty (A.D. 960-1279) the great period of sculpture is over. The extremely high intellectual plane

to which Chinese civilization attained during the dynasty resulted in an inevitable decline of religious enthusiasm. The popularity of the Zen form of Buddhism, a meditative (pantheistic) philosophy, practised with an elaborate game of question and answer, did much to weaken the enthusiasm for images. Painting was recognized as the supreme art of the day, and it is probable that silk-paintings of the deity largely superseded sculptural representations. Certainly such statues as survive of this date show a much more pictorial conception than hitherto, a concept well borne out by the marble relief of Kuan-yin, goddess of Mercy, in the Freer collection dated A.D. 1095. Some specimens of a group of large wooden figures of Kuan-yin must date from this dynasty, though one of the most important and characteristic in the Metropolitan Museum, New York, bears the date A.D. 1282. They are graceful figures with softly modelled bodies, easy-flowing draperies, and elaborate jewellery. The naturalistic treatment and the flowing rhythmical formula will soon lapse into a lifeless convention, and it is only in a few small pieces, in which their charm is their power, that sculpture at a later date achieves anything.

Under Kublai Khan the Yüan Dynasty (A.D. 1280-1367) witnessed a revival of activity in the making of sculpture. Buddhism became for the first time the official religion and it was the Lamaistic form, now the chief religion of Tibet, which was adopted. The images were made under the influence of Tibetan monks and the Nepalese types were popular. One of the chief sculptors, Aniko, was a Nepalese youth, who was a favourite of Archbishop P'agspa. These Nepalese types continued in favour in the Ming Dynasty (A.D. 1368-1644). Several fine examples of Yüan sculpture exist in architectural decoration, chief among them being the Chu Yüan gate in the Great Wall, north of Peking, which is dated A.D. 1345.

With the Ming Dynasty sculpture enters a different grade. Such monumental figures as exist, the chief of which are the rows of animals and figures which line the approach to the Royal tombs, north of Peking, are tame in comparison with their forerunners, and it is only in some of the smaller figures that any trace is left of the quality of the previous

PLATE VIII



WOODEN FIGURE, PAINTED AND GILT OVER GESSO: KUAN-YIN

SUNG DYNASTY (A.D. 960-1279)

H. 48 in.

*Victoria and Albert Museum, London  
(Eumorfopoulos Collection)*

[Face p. 40.]



dynasties. But here it is more a question of craftsmanship than art and for that reason it is perhaps a suitable moment to treat of a material in which the Chinese have always excelled, ivory. Very few early examples in this material exist, but the admirable relief with a yak in the Stoclet collection at Brussels probably goes back as far as the Yüan Dynasty, while a few outstanding examples, such as the Buddha in the Victoria and Albert Museum, can be confidently assigned to the Ming Dynasty. The majority of the slender Kuan-yins are to be dated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as are the numerous arm-rests and other small objects, for which ivory was largely employed. In the time of the Emperor K'ang Hsi (A.D. 1662-1722) a number of workshops were established inside the Palace at Peking, among them that of the ivory-carvers, and it is probably to this period, rather than earlier, that the majority of the so-called Ming pieces belong. The workshops came to an end about the end of the eighteenth century. A flourishing industry was established at Canton during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and it was there that were made the intricately carved concentric spheres, the models of palaces, the delicately-pierced fans and card-cases, the sets of red and white chessmen, which were the frequent spoil of the sea-faring ancestors of so many families. Though highly ingenious their artistic interest is small, and it is as curios that their value lies. Another and uncommon material much used in China is that of rhinoceros horn. The one-horned variety from India and the two-horned from Sumatra supplied the stock, which was thought not merely to have medicinal properties but to act as a poison detector. It was therefore made into drinking cups and, in addition, at certain periods was used for inlay in belts, doubtless to act as a protection to the stomach. Good and old examples of these rhinoceros cups were much prized, but as works of art their aesthetic value is non-existent.

#### LACQUER

Lacquer is one of the oldest arts in China. The foundation of the material is the natural gum of the Ch'i shu tree,

*Rhus vernicifera*. The gum, which as a rule reaches the market in a dried form, is crushed and strained through cloth to refine it, is next coloured to the various tints required and is then ready for use. The chief colours are :—

- (1) *Chu ch'i*, the scarlet, derived from cinnabar (sulphide of mercury).
- (2) *Chao ch'i*, the yellow, derived from gamboge.
- (3) *Hei ch'i*, the black, derived from iron sulphate, usually in the form of iron filings in acid.
- (4) *Li sē*, the brown, derived from cinnabar and iron sulphide mixed.

In addition, a green is derived from orpiment, the yellow sulphide of arsenic, and is varied in tone by the admixture of indigo. With the materials thus obtained the lacquerer paints on his coats over a foundation of wood, metal or papier mâché, in successive layers, varying in number but never less than three, allowing each coat to dry before the next is applied. The object is then ready for the decoration. Lacquer is divided into two types :—

- (a) *Hua ch'i* with painted decoration.
- (b) *Tiao ch'i* with carved decoration.

(a) *Hua ch'i* or *painted lacquer*.

The oldest example of this type is a small bowl found by the Koslov Expedition in 1924-5 and dated A.D. 2, other specimens of the type having been found by Japanese excavators in Korea. It is decorated with a strong design of spirals, derived from metal inlay patterns, in red lacquer pigment on a black ground. This small group is in isolation by itself, nor indeed have we any large corpus of material of any early date. A few isolated specimens, mainly with simple foliage designs, often with inlay of mother-of-pearl, have been tentatively ascribed to the Sung Dynasty and a few mirrors with backs similarly decorated can with safety be attributed to the T'ang Dynasty (A.D. 618-906). Foremost among these is the small but choice series in the Imperial Shōsō-in at Nara in Japan, and a number of other similar objects including the celebrated set of biwas, a kind of guitar, with inlaid lacquer

backs. All these T'ang and Sung pieces have simple patterns, generally of a floral nature, painted in colours on a dark ground and enriched with mother-of-pearl inlay, known in China as "*lo tien*". In addition to painted designs and the inlay described above, a certain amount of relief work was also employed, the patterns being raised in composition and coloured over (*ch'iang chin*). The chief centre of this class of work in earlier times was Chia-hsing fu, in the province of Chekiang, and in more modern times Canton and Foochow. At the first of these two places were made during the early part of the nineteenth century the elaborately painted boxes, fans, etc., which belong to the same genre as the carved ivory balls and chessmen.

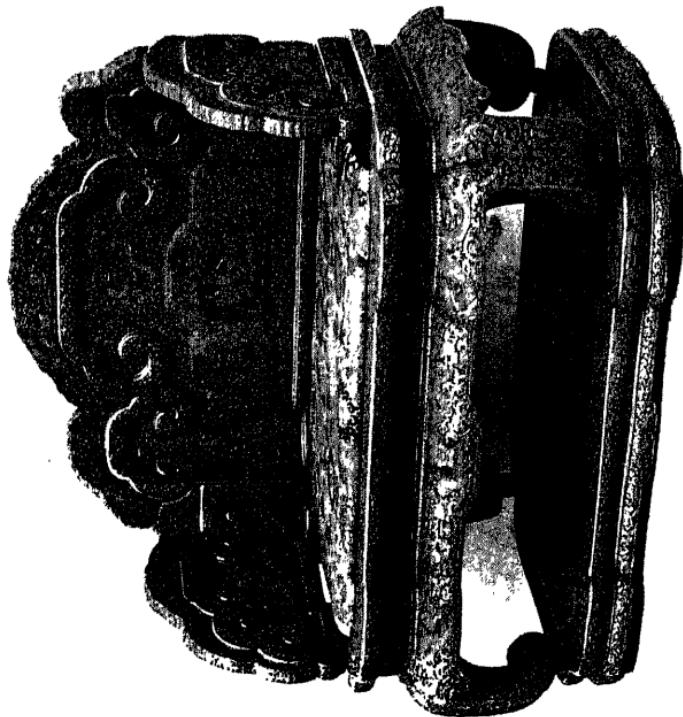
(b) *Tiao ch'i* or carved lacquer.

The main centres of this industry were Soo-chow and Peking, and this kind of lacquer has often been known by both these names. The most prized colour was the scarlet or cinnabar, but some of the other shades are equally effective. The decoration of *tiao ch'i* is as a rule of the most elaborate description, the whole surface being covered with landscape, floral or animal designs, the patterns being worked while the lacquer was still not completely dried. Different layers of colours were employed and one tint carved through to the lower showing a contrasting effect; sometimes as many as four layers were used in this way. In addition in some of the more gaudy specimens the surface was encrusted with semi-precious stones and gilt metal. Many pieces of this class of lacquer exist of the Ming Dynasty, a certain number with date-marks. The lacquer of the Hsüan Te (A.D. 1426-35) and Yung Lo (A.D. 1403-24) periods was particularly celebrated, but dated pieces of these two reigns are rare. An especially fine vase of the first reign was exhibited at the Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1915. The quality of these Ming pieces is as a rule higher than that of the eighteenth-century examples, and a tendency for the plain surfaces to crack in minute veins is a distinguishing feature, but it is often extremely difficult to tell an eighteenth-century copy from a Ming piece; the practice of copying old and cherished specimens in the same way as they did the porcelain having prevailed in the eighteenth

century. The Emperor Ch'ien Lung (A.D. 1737-96) had a great fondness for lacquer and had every kind of article made in it. Many of these found their way to Europe as the result of the Boxer Rebellion and the sack of the Summer Palace ; conspicuous among them the throne of Ch'ien Lung now in the Victoria and Albert Museum. Ch'ien Lung's more refined taste in lacquer is shown by the small cups of plain scarlet lacquer in the form of chrysanthemum blossoms, some of which exist. The base of the flower in black lacquer is incised with a poem by the Emperor picked out in gold. Carved lacquer is one of the few Chinese industries which has not survived till modern times, nothing of any consequence having been made after the end of the eighteenth century (cf. Pl. IX).

Included in this category must be reckoned the incised panels of lacquered wood used for screens, chests, etc., which were largely exported to Europe in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and are popularly known by the name of coromandel. These panels were made of hard red wood, lacquered black, and on them were drawn and incised patterns, often extremely elaborate, in varying degrees of depth, the surface in many cases being chipped away to a considerable extent. The patterns so carved were then coloured in light, lively shades and in gold, the tinctures being mixed with a lac medium and applied in thick coats. The effect of these brilliantly coloured designs against the dark ground is extremely striking and the decorative quality of many of the pieces has proved attractive to Western eyes as well as to the East. In some of the screens as many as twelve leaves are used and the design shows a continuous pattern throughout the length of the screen. The best examples of this type of work date from the reign of K'ang Hsi (1662-1722), and though a few pieces may be found a little earlier in date, the majority of the specimens may be grouped in the eighteenth century.

PLATE IX



IMPERIAL THRONE OF CH'ien Lung (A.D. 1736-95) : CINNABAR-RED PEKING  
LACQUER

W. 48 in.

Victoria and Albert Museum, London

[Face p. 44.]



## THE POTTER'S ART

*by*

R. L. HOBSON

THE ceramic greatness of China begins comparatively late in a history that goes back beyond the days of Homer. It is true that a people which settled in the regions now called Kansu, Honan and Manchuria left behind them a painted pottery of remarkably advanced technique, thin and fine-grained in body, well shaped with the aid of the slow wheel, if indeed the fast wheel was not actually used—and strongly baked. But this pottery, strikingly hand, some as some of it is, plays little or no part in the evolution of the Chinese ceramic art. Its red- and black-painted ornament is akin to that of the more Western wares found at Tripolye, Anau, Susa, Ur and even in the Indus Valley, suggesting that a race which spread over these wide regions actually sent out a branch across Asia into prehistoric China. But whether the people of the painted pottery withdrew, were destroyed or were absorbed, their art, at its best in the earliest stages, degenerated and disappeared without having any lasting influence.

The primitive pottery, which is more truly Chinese, is a coarse grey ware whose only ornament at first was the impression of matting or a few roughly incised patterns. This is found side by side with the painted ware, but it is far more widely distributed and its evolution can be traced from the second millennium B.C. down to Han times (206 B.C.—A.D. 220). In the Yin and Chou periods it borrowed the ornament of the contemporary bronzes, and in certain important centres, where suitable clay was found, it became a fine white pottery of definitely artistic pretensions.

But the most important stage in Chinese ceramic develop-

ment was reached with the introduction of glaze. Glaze, the glassy coating which makes pottery watertight and fits it for a hundred household uses, gave it at once an important place in domestic economy, and from this stage the evolution of pottery into a thing of beauty was assured.

It would be interesting to know exactly when the Chinese first made use of glaze and whether they evolved the idea themselves or borrowed it from Western Asia. All we know so far for certain is that it was in use in the Han Dynasty, which ruled from 206 B.C. to A.D. 220, a period when contact with Western Asia was firmly established. Archaeologists to-day are busy searching for evidence of glaze in China in the Chou Dynasty (1122-249 B.C.), but proof of this is still far from complete, though there is at least one known specimen with glaze over ornament of Chou bronze type which renders the supposition probable.

The typical Han glaze is a lead silicate such as is found on contemporary Roman pottery. It has a natural, warm yellowish tint which over the typical red pottery of the time produces a brown colour. But it was usually coloured with a copper oxide which transforms it into leaf-green; and many of the Han glazes to-day have an adventitious beauty, due to long burial which has dissolved the soft lead glaze into layers of gold or silver iridescence.

Another glaze, and one of unquestioned Chinese origin, can be traced at least as far back as the end of the Han period. It is derived from wood ashes and only forms on pottery fired at a relatively high temperature, over which it spreads a strong brown skin. We have here, in fact, a brown-glazed stoneware which may perhaps be regarded as the first tentative stage in the evolution of porcelain.

It was not, however, for many centuries that glazed pottery became the rule in China. In our collections of early wares up to the end of the T'ang Dynasty (A.D. 618-906) glazed and unglazed pottery stand side by side.

Our acquaintance with the early pottery, ranging from the Chou to the end of the T'ang Dynasty, extensive as it is, is confined to excavated objects; and these are not so much the pottery of everyday use as special wares made for funeral purposes. The prevalent idea that the spirit of the dead followed the pursuits which had engaged him

in life, led first to the sacrifice of human beings and domestic animals at the tomb, and later, when humaner counsels prevailed, to the burial of models made of straw, wood, clay and occasionally metal. And so the excavated tombs have yielded a host of pottery figures of men, women, animals, birds and superhuman creatures, besides models of houses, furniture, farm buildings, implements and utensils of all kinds. These give us a glimpse of the life and habits of the ancient Chinese, of their costumes and equipment, and they are of much antiquarian interest. Nor are they lacking in artistic merit, for many of the figures are modelled with skill and force, and even the banalities of farm buildings—the granary, the well and the sheep pen—are transformed into ornamental objects by a clever conventionalization.

But it is only occasionally, and in the tombs of the great and wealthy, that pottery of high finish and real artistic merit has been found, and from this we can guess at the superior quality of the wares which must have furnished and adorned the houses of the well-to-do.

The pottery with lead glaze and the hard ware with wood-ash glaze continued in use throughout the period from Han to T'ang, and with it have been found quantities of unglazed ware which is usually tricked out with coloured pigments—white, black, blue and green. These pigments are not fixed by firing and are liable to rub off if handled. Such wares, unsuited for daily use, were obviously designed for funeral purposes. Nor have they anything in common with the ancient painted pottery of the Honan and Kansu type, though the fact that both are painted might suggest some relationship. Occasionally the painted designs include human figures, animal life and even rough landscape, linking them with the earliest Chinese painting on silk ; but as a rule they consist of bands of formal ornament, often derived from the decoration of bronze vessels.

Frequently too the pottery shapes at this time are based on bronze models, if indeed the pots are not actually cheap replicas of bronze.

Many of the tomb figures of this intermediate period, particularly those in a blackish clay relieved by lively pigmentation, are modelled with a vivacity and humour not

surpassed in the more sophisticated creations of the T'ang Dynasty. These black ware figurines are commonly attributed to the Northern Wei Dynasty (A.D. 386-535).

The wares of the T'ang Dynasty (A.D. 618-906) in their variety of technique and decoration show that the potter's art had made notable progress. The funeral pottery was still as a rule made of a soft, low-fired material, usually white or pinkish white ; and it was generally covered with a transparent glaze which was either colourless or of a pale straw tint. On the more elaborate specimens the glaze is variegated by dabs of colouring oxides producing blue, green, and amber yellow patches, streaks and mottling (Pl. X). The modelling of figures, especially that of horses and camels, is often remarkable for lifelike vigour and dramatic action ; and the forms of vases, jars, ewers and other vessels display a fuller development of the ceramic sense. Graceful shapes flow from the potter's wheel to be enriched with well-balanced ornament, incised or in stamped relief or touched with polychrome glazes. The brush too is used for tracing designs in black pigment or in coloured clay "slips".<sup>1</sup> And even in the T'ang funeral wares we realize that the greatness of the Chinese potter was already established.

Somewhere in the four centuries between Han and T'ang was evolved that wonderful discovery which has made the whole world China's debtor. There is no record of the invention of porcelain and there was probably no inventor. It doubtless came from the tentative use of certain clays with which certain districts in China are richly endowed. The essential elements of porcelain are china clay (kaolin) and china stone (petuntse), a decomposed felspar. Analysis of some of the wood-ash glazed wares made quite near the Han period shows the presence of kaolin ; but it is a far cry from these reddish stone-wares to the white translucent material which we call porcelain.<sup>2</sup> It is true that our definition of porcelain is far stricter than that of the Chinese equivalent *tz'u*. Neither whiteness of body nor translu-

<sup>1</sup> Slip is a potter's term for liquid clay.

<sup>2</sup> Our word porcelain, derived from the Latin *porcella* (a cowrie shell), is at least as old as the days of Marco Polo, who visited China in the thirteenth century.

PLATE X



COVERED JAR: EARTHENWARE: CHEVRON DESIGNS IN COLOUR  
T'ANG DYNASTY (A.D. 618-906)  
H. 10·15 in.  
*British Museum, London*  
(Eumorfopoulos Collection)



cency are essential in the latter, the one indispensable condition being that the ware be hard and compact enough to give a musical note on percussion. Many of the Sung wares for instance which are classed as *tz'u* have grey or even brown body material, and would rank in our classification as stoneware or something between it and porcelain proper. This circumstance makes it useless to try and trace the origin of porcelain by reference to literature. But *tz'u* certainly includes white porcelain in its meanings and we have at any rate an allusion to white *tz'u* (*pai tz'u*) in sixth-century annals, which may fairly be assumed to connote white porcelain. By the ninth century white porcelain was already an article of commerce; and many fragments of it, as well as of green celadon porcelain, have been dug up at Samarra, on the Tigris, beneath palace buildings which were only used for about fifty years during that century.

Even among the T'ang tomb wares there are many which are hard enough to qualify for the title *tz'u*. Whether they were made merely by firing the soft white ware to an unusually high temperature or whether they have a special composition, they have bodies which a knife will not scratch and they are of a white or light buff colour. We may assume that the finer domestic T'ang ware, as distinct from the funeral goods, was generally of this harder and more practical material. At any rate Samarra has given us, in addition to white porcelain, fragments of a hard buff ware covered with typical T'ang mottled glaze, and the Samarra wares may be taken as samples of the ordinary Chinese domestic wares of the period. On these hard, porcellanous bodies we find other types of glaze, which are more refractory and evidently contain a fels-pathic element. Their colours include white, black, a watery green of celadon type, true celadon, and a chocolate brown which is occasionally, and probably by accident, variegated with splashes of milky grey and blue.

These technical developments lead on to the great period of monochrome porcelains, the Sung Dynasty; but the high-fired T'ang wares, as we know them, are not artistically equal to the best of the soft-glazed pottery. Some of this, such as the dishes with elegant "mirror" patterns

strongly incised and filled in with washes of blue, green, and amber, are really beautiful; and there is a covered potiche (ex Eumorfopoulos collection) in the Exhibition which shows this type of ware at its best. It is one of the loveliest pieces of pottery in existence.

But it is clear that T'ang pottery, revealed through the imperfect medium of the funeral wares, leaves much to our imagination. We can only guess at its splendid possibilities. The T'ang was a classic period for poetry, painting and sculpture, and we may be sure that the minor arts did not lag far behind. The grand pottery figures of Lohan, of which the noblest can be seen in the British Museum, and the lovely Eumorfopoulos potiche both suggest that ceramic art in the T'ang Dynasty rose to a greatness of which we have so far only been vouchsafed a glimpse.

The five short dynasties which crowded the interval between T'ang and Sung (A.D. 906-960) are noted in ceramic annals for two kinds of ware. One is the almost mythical Ch'ai ware reputed to have been "blue as the sky after rain, thin as paper and resonant as a musical stone"; the other is the *pi-sé* (secret colour) ware of Yüeh Chou. The Ch'ai was made for a few years only and for the exclusive use of the Emperor Shih Tsung who reigned from A.D. 954 to 959. Though specimens in various collections from time to time have been hopefully labelled Ch'ai, they all differ widely in their nature and none can so far be considered convincing.

The *pi-sé* ware on the other hand has been identified. The factory site has been located at Yü-yao Hsien, near Shao-hsing Fu (formerly Yüeh Chou) in northern Chekiang; and the fragments unearthed there belong to the green-glazed, or celadon, family, though the green has a decided tinge of grey or olive. From A.D. 907 to 976 the *pi-sé* ware was reserved for the private use of the princes of Wu and Yüeh; but it was made before this, in the T'ang Dynasty, and it continued during the Sung.

#### THE SUNG PERIOD

With the Sung Dynasty (A.D. 960-1279) we enter on one of the great periods of Chinese art, which was nurtured

by imperial patronage and favoured by long periods of peace and prosperity. The ceramics of the period are fortunately known to us by something better than funeral wares, for enough of the finer Sung specimens have been preserved above ground to allow us to appreciate their true worth. Ceramic historians, too, have given us descriptions—too brief, it is true, and not free from tiresome ambiguities—of the most noted Sung factories and their productions; and efforts are being made to-day to locate the pottery sites and search for sherds and “wasters” which should make the identification of the wares a certainty. Some of these excavations have already been fruitful, and it is hoped that the Chinese, realizing at length that the spade is mightier than the pen, will persevere in this important form of research.

Historians are agreed that of the numerous Sung wares six are of outstanding merit: the Ju yao<sup>1</sup> made at Ju Chou in Honan and in a special kiln set up within the palace precincts at K'ai-fêng Fu; Kuan<sup>2</sup> yao, made first at K'ai-fêng Fu and after 1127 at the southern capital, Hangchow; Ko yao, reputed to have been made in the Lung-ch'üan district of Chekiang; Lung-ch'üan yao, the typical green-glazed, celadon, porcelain of that district; Ting yao, a white porcelain made at Ting Chou in Chihli; and Chün yao, made at Chün Chou, the modern Yü-hsien, in Honan.

To these may be added the Chien yao made at Chien-ning Fu in Fukien, the Tz'ü Chou wares made near Shun-tê Fu in the southern corner of Chihli, and a few others.

The Imperial Ju yao was made by selected potters transferred from Ju Chou to the palace precincts at K'ai-fêng Fu, for a few years only before 1127 when the Sung court was driven south by the invading Tartars. It has long eluded identification, in spite of the fact that it has been described in detail by Chinese writers; for the descriptive characters used are so ambiguous that they can be made to fit several quite different kinds of ware. It will be enough here to say that in the Peking Palace collections the label, *ju yao*, was attached to specimens of a buff por-

<sup>1</sup> *yao* = kiln, or the ware made in the kiln.

<sup>2</sup> *kuan* = imperial.

cellanous stoneware with glaze of pale lavender grey colour, sometimes distinctly blue, sometimes greenish, and usually crackled. Ju dishes have a splayed foot-rim and a few oval spurmarks<sup>1</sup> beneath. This identification of Ju ware is accepted for specimens in the Exhibition which are labelled accordingly.

The only clue we have to the identity of the Northern Kuan ware of K'ai-fêng Fu is analogy with the Southern Kuan of Hangchow. The latter was made in two factories, one near the "Suburban Altar", below the Tortoise Hill, south of the West Lake, and the other, and reputedly more important, on the Phoenix Hill. The Phoenix Hill kilns have not yet been located, but those near the "Suburban Altar" have been found, and quantities of sherds and kiln-wasters from the site show us exactly what the Southern Kuan ware was like. The local clay from which it was made is dark-coloured and the glaze is thick and smooth and of a lovely dove-grey colour, inclining now towards blue, now towards green. It has either a long straggling crackle<sup>2</sup> or a more regularly spaced crackle with wide mesh, which may or may not be emphasized by a red or black pigment rubbed into the fissures. The beautiful vase (Pl. XI), with pale bluish grey glaze, is one of many fine examples of Kuan ware in the Exhibition.

Ko yao, the ware of the elder brother (*ko*), is reputed to have been made by the elder Chang at Lung-ch'üan towards the end of the Sung period. History states that it was always crackled and that it was made with dark-coloured clay imported from the Phoenix Hill at Hangchow. Whatever the truth of this account, Ko and Kuan wares were so closely akin that many Chinese writers do not attempt to differentiate them. The Ko body should

<sup>1</sup> Spur-marks are the scars left on the base of the ware by the pointed supports on which it rested in the kiln.

<sup>2</sup> The splitting up of the glaze into a network of cracks, no doubt an accidental effect at first, was recognized as an additional attraction in monochrome glazes; and means were found to produce the crackle at will. In the fully developed technique of the eighteenth century, crackle, obtained by mixing certain kinds of clay with the glaze, was so perfectly controlled that alternating bands of wide-meshed and small-meshed crackle could be produced in the same piece.

PLATE XI



KUAN YAO PORCELAIN VASE

SUNG DYNASTY (A.D. 960-1279)

H. 10·75 in.

*British Museum, London*

*(Eumorfopoulos Collection)*

[*Face p. 52.*



be dark coloured. The Ko glazes are thick and unctuous, varying in colour from stone-grey to greenish grey and even to the yellowish colour of millet (*mi sē*). The crackle is usually close-meshed and regular. Modern Chinese connoisseurs distinguish the Ko glaze from the Kuan by the mass of bubbles which are conspicuous in the former and, to the naked eye at any rate, not visible in the latter. The Ko glaze is more moist-looking and glassy : the Kuan glaze more like a lightly polished stone.

Lung-ch'üan in Chekiang was the home of the green-glazed porcelains which we call celadons. They have been known in Western Asia, Egypt and in Europe since the Middle Ages, when they had a great vogue in princely courts owing to the tradition that they are capable of disclosing the presence of poison in food. The identification of these celadons with the Lung-ch'üan yao of the Chinese textbooks has never been in doubt, and it has been amply confirmed by excavation on the kilnsites in the district. The typical celadon of the export trade has a grey, porcelainous body and a thick, smooth, translucent glaze of sea-green colour. It is a ware of great thickness and strength, admirably suited to withstand the risks of medieval transport by sea and land. But besides this massive ware a finer celadon, thinner and whiter in body and covered with a more delicate glaze which varies from bluish green to grey-green, was made, it is said, by the younger of the Chang brothers. This Chang yao is beloved by the Japanese collectors who call it *kinuta seiji*, "mallet celadon", from a famous mallet (*kinuta*)-shaped vase, one of their temple treasures. It rarely figures among the goods exported to the West.

The charm of the Sung porcelains lies in the delicate colour of their high-fired glazes. They needed no added decoration, and those with opaque glaze, like the Kuan and Ko, were unsuited to receive any. The translucency of the celadon glaze, however, tempted the decorator ; and we find the celadons, especially the export types, carved or incised with floral designs or moulded with low reliefs. Sometimes stamped reliefs were applied to the surface and left free from the glaze, and these, owing to the iron content of the clay, burnt to a rusty red in the kiln. Another

but rarer decoration was effected by dabs of ferruginous material at intervals over the body which produced reddish brown spots or patches. The Japanese call wares so decorated *tobi seiji* or buckwheat celadon.

The Lung-ch'üan potters are said to have moved to the neighbouring Ch'u-chou Fu at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty (1380), and the industry here is believed to have come to an end with this dynasty in 1644. But there are other kinds of celadon besides those made at Lung-ch'üan and Ch'u-chou. Quantities of broken pieces have been unearthed at Hangchow and as they have some distinctive features, it may be perhaps assumed that they are of local make. One kind is represented by dishes and bowls with thick, heavy greyish green glaze and a small foot which is always bare of glaze beneath. Another is a lovely smooth grey-green celadon, usually in the form of bowls with lotus petal pattern carved on the exterior. It is neatly finished at the base which has a wedge-shaped rim and is glazed beneath. Some of these bowls have a finely crackled glaze like that of Ko ware.

The "secret colour" ware of Yü-yao Hsien has been mentioned on p. 50, a celadon with grey stoneware body and a grey-green glaze. Some of it has an olive colour, like that of an important group, which for want of a better name is generally labelled Northern celadon. The term Northern celadon, representing a grey ware with thin olive-green glaze which usually covers moulded or carved designs, is not however a misnomer. For the ware has also been found in excavations on northern sites in Honan. Anhwei and Kwangtung provinces are also reputed to have had their celadons, and the white porcelain of Ching-tê Chén was often dressed in a celadon glaze, while outside China the ware was made in Japan, Corea and Siam.

The factories at Ting Chou in Chihli date back to the T'ang Dynasty; but their reputation was made under Imperial patronage in the Sung. Their specialty was a white porcelain with a warm white glaze of the colour and texture of ivory. The Ting ware, though well able to appear in its own unadorned beauty, is usually decorated with freely carved or etched designs in the best Sung style. A more mechanical decoration was pressed out in relief

on a mould, and we read also of painted Ting ware and of black, red and even purple Ting. None of these last has been identified with certainty and one at least, the purple Ting, must be regarded as entirely apocryphal.

Another kind of Ting ware is known as *t'u Ting* because of its more earthy (*t'u*) body, and it has a soft creamy glaze, usually minutely crackled. The Ting factories continued active well into the Ming Dynasty and their output must have been very large. Two features are characteristic of the technique of the Sung Ting ware. The bowls and dishes have a glazed base and an unglazed lip as though they had been fired upside down; and the glaze on the exterior often runs in brownish drops which are likened to "tear-stains".

There is a host of white and cream-white wares of varying quality which were intended to compete with the Ting porcelain. Their manufacture was spread mainly over the Kiangnan district, which includes the provinces of Anhwei and Kiangsu; and there is the Southern Ting ware of the Sung Dynasty which we have reason to believe was made at Chüchou in Kiangsi. Moreover, in the great porcelain centre of Ching-tê Chén in Kiangsi, in the Ming Dynasty and later, many lovely white wares with opaque body and creamy glaze were made in what was believed to be the Ting tradition.

Uniformity of colour was one of the criteria of the Sung monochromes in the eyes of the old Chinese critics, and consequently the variegated, *flambé* effects on the Chün wares were not at first appreciated. To-day they stand high in the estimation of collectors. The historic centre of the manufacture of Chün yao is Chün Chou (now Yü Hsien) in Honan; but excavation on numerous sites, in a radius of about 100 miles from K'ai-fêng Fu, proves the manufacture to have been widespread and general throughout this large district. Even at Ju Chou the excavated sherds show more of the Chün types than of that which has been identified as the historic Ju yao.

This widespread Chün ware has a body of porcellanous stoneware varying in colour from grey to brown and the characteristic glaze is thick and opalescent, usually of lavender grey colour with underlying elements of blue and

red which emerge in patches or wide suffusions. Sometimes the glaze is predominantly blue; sometimes a rich purplish red invades the surface; and in many cases the expanse of grey is suddenly broken by a patch of purple. On the commoner types of this ware the glaze stops in a thick welt, or in a line of drops, short of the base. The Chün glaze is full of bubbles, and its colour is partly due to opalescence, and partly to the colouring agent, copper oxide, which under varying conditions of the kiln is able to produce blue, red, green or turquoise colours.

The best of the Chün wares are a group apart and seem to be the output of a set of kilns, which perhaps worked specially for the Court. Their body is finer, and greyer in colour; and it is coated with a wash of ferruginous clay which forms a brown glaze on the projecting edges and under the bases of the vessels, which are usually flowerpots or bulb bowls. The rest of the piece is covered with opalescent glaze usually grey in the interior and more or less richly suffused with purple or crimson on the exterior. The bubbly glaze is minutely pitted, and in the more solid grey areas there are curious V-shaped partings which the Chinese call "earthworm tracks". The brown glaze of the base is scarred by a ring of spurmarks and incised with a numeral, ranging from one to ten, which probably indicates the size of the pot or bowl.

Next in quality to these numbered Chüns comes a group of bowls, dishes, waterpots, etc., with fine grey porcellanous body and a superior glaze of lavender grey with splashes and suffused areas of purple. The splashes often suggest specific shapes, e.g. a peach, a bat, a dragon, a written character. The glaze on this group always reaches the base rim and partially or wholly covers the base.

Like the Ting yao the Chün wares lasted into the Ming Dynasty and had many imitators. The most interesting of these is the so-called "soft Chün", a ware with soft-looking, buff body and a very thick, opalescent and minutely crackled glaze, usually of an even lavender blue or lavender turquoise colour, but sometimes with flushes, or well-defined splashes, of crimson or purple. It is not certain where or when this soft Chün was made. Other imitations were made at Fatshan in Kwangtung and Yi-hsing in

PLATE XII



TZÜ CHOU STONEWARE VASE

SUNG DYNASTY (A.D. 960-1279)

H. 14·8 in.

*British Museum, London*

*(Eumorfopoulos Collection)*

| Face p. 56.



Kiangsu in the local wares, and at Ching-tê Chén on the fine white porcelain body.

The black-glazed tea-bowls of Chien-ning Fu, in Fukien, were popular in the tea-testing competitions in the Sung Dynasty. Their thick material made them cool to hold, and the black glaze showed up the least trace of the green tea. They represent all we know of the Chien yao, a hard blackish pottery with thick black glaze which is usually streaked with golden brown or silver in fine lines like hare's fur.

The masters of tea-ceremony in Japan have always delighted in the Chien yao bowls and they have given them the name of *temmoku*,<sup>1</sup> a term which European collectors have stretched to cover other black-glazed wares such as those made at Ch'i-an Fu in Kiangsi and in the Honan potteries. The Ch'i-an *temmoku* has a buff body and a relatively thin, brown-black glaze. Tortoise-shell markings in golden brown are usual on the exterior of the Ch'i-an bowls, while their interiors often have a greyish hare's-fur glaze painted with sketchy designs in yellowish brown slip.

The Honan *temmoku* has a white porcellanous body and a glossy black glaze sometimes patterned with golden brown. On some rare pieces the glaze is powdered with silvery spots, and for this the Japanese have the name "oil-spot *temmoku*".

Tz'ü Chou, in southern Chihli, was known for its potteries in the sixth century and their activity has never ceased to this day. Their reputation was high in the Sung Dynasty ; and rightly so, for the Sung Tz'ü Chou jars and vases are splendidly decorative. But, the prevailing decoration being not monochrome but pictorial, they did not conform to the aesthetic canons of the time and never attained to Imperial patronage. The typical Tz'ü Chou ware is a buff stoneware dressed with white slip and painted with free, artistic designs in brown or black under a transparent cream glaze (Pl. XII). This splendidly telling decoration is almost equalled by another Tz'ü Chou type in which the buff ware is coated with a slip of contrasting colour—white,

<sup>1</sup> In Chinese *t'ien-mu*. Buddhist monks from the Zen monastery on T'ien-mu Shan, in Chekiang, are said to have introduced the Chien yao into Japan.

black or brown—which is carved with bold floral patterns, the background being scraped clean of the slip and the body material exposed. These *graffiato* designs are covered with transparent glaze, except when they are formed with brown and black slips which, either from their natural gloss or because glaze material is mixed with them, emerge from the kiln in glossy black relief against the mat, unglazed background. Many pleasing effects are obtained by variations of these two techniques; and there are other Tz'ü Chou types, such as a plain creamy white of much beauty and a cream white ware painted in enamel colours—green, yellow and red—with or without the addition of brown and maroon slips.

There are some other very beautiful wares which have painted or *graffiato* decoration in Tz'ü Chou style covered with green or turquoise-blue glazes of which the body material is red rather than buff, and which were probably made elsewhere at potteries working on the Tz'ü Chou lines. The Chinese purist may have disapproved of the Tz'ü Chou type of pottery, but its satisfying shapes and fine bold decoration make a powerful appeal to Western taste.

The Sung potter paid scrupulous attention to the forms of his wares. Bowls and dishes of the Imperial porcelains have graceful lines, and the vases of bottle shape are often supremely elegant. On the other hand some vases, incense burners, etc., incline to be academic, the fashion of the time favouring the reproduction of old bronze shapes which could only be done by casting in moulds. The less sophisticated pottery of Tz'ü Chou type usually appears in simple wheel-made shapes in which the Chinese potter excels.

It only remains to mention a Sung ware which is apparently ignored by the old Chinese textbooks. This is the soft, white porcelain with faintly bluish glaze, of a colour popularly known as *ying ch'ing* or "misty blue". The finer specimens are remarkable for the delicacy of their potting and the translucency of the ware; and they are as dainty as anything produced by the Chinese potter. But much *ying ch'ing* porcelain has now been excavated; and it varies widely in quality, some of it having an impure speckled glaze. Its decoration is usually carved or

moulded, and resembles that of the Ting yao and the Northern celadon. Where it was made is not clear, if indeed its manufacture was not widespread and general. It has been found in the neighbourhood of Hangchow, in several places in Kiangsi, as far west as Szechwan and as far east as Corea. We may perhaps regard it as a tomb ware which has only come to light in recent years, too late for mention in the standard Chinese ceramic books.

The Yüan Dynasty established by the conquering Mongols under Kublai Khan ruled China from 1280 to 1368, but it was not notable for ceramic developments and for the purposes of this sketch it may be regarded as a prolongation of the Sung period.

### MING PORCELAIN

With the establishment of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) ceramic interest is focused on Ching-tê Chén, the great pottery town in Kiangsi. Nanking, the first Ming capital, is within easy reach, and we are told that an Imperial porcelain factory was built in 1369 under the Jewel Hill in Ching-tê Chén to supply the needs of the Court. This it continued to do even after the change of the Ming capital to Peking in 1421.

Ching-tê Chén was destined by nature to be the ceramic metropolis of China. The surrounding hills abound in the necessary materials. Chief of these are kaolin which makes the "bones" of the ware and petuntse,<sup>1</sup> a fusible felspathic substance which makes the "flesh" of the ware, blending it into a vitrified, translucent mass, and which, softened by a little lime, supplies the glaze. But there are many others, such as fire-clay for the seggars or cases which protect the porcelain in the kiln, and cobaltiferous ore to make the blue colouring.

With the rise of Ching-tê Chén, supported by Imperial patronage, the old Sung factories faded into insignificance. The vogue of the monochrome glazes too had passed, and the once despised pictorial decoration became fashionable.

The pictorial decoration, which the white porcelain of

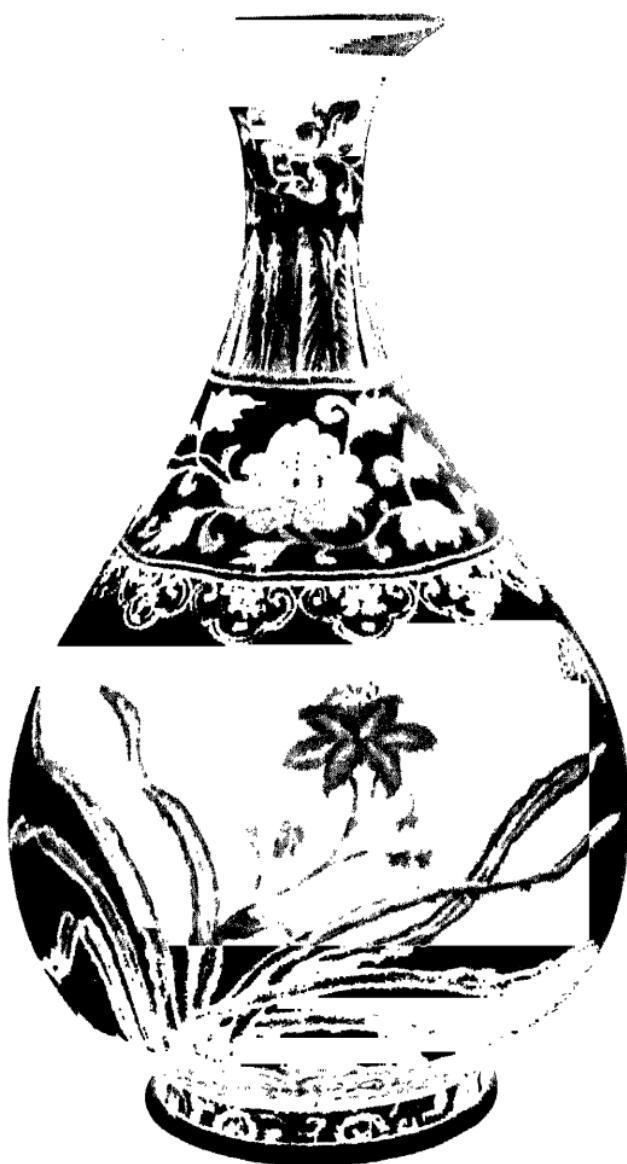
<sup>1</sup> So called because it was delivered at the factories in the form of white (*pai*) bricklets (*tun tz'u*).

Ching-tê Chén was well suited to receive, was produced in several ways—in underglaze colours, in enamels on the glaze or on the unglazed “biscuit”, and in coloured glazes. The underglaze colours are painted on the body of the ware prior to glazing, and they must be able to stand the intense heat required to fuse the felspathic glaze. Only two colouring oxides used by the Ming potters were able to do this, cobalt which gives the underglaze blue and copper which gives the underglaze red. White porcelain painted in underglaze blue, blue and white as we call it, was not unknown in Sung and Yüan times. Now it became the rage; and judging from the periodic lists of the porcelain supplied to the Court, blue and white held a substantial majority over all the other kinds (Pl. XIII).

Much attention was naturally given to the choice of designs and to the execution of the brushwork, but much also depended on the high quality of the blue and this could only be assured by careful preparation of the cobalt. It was found that cobalt imported from a Mohammedan country in the West (probably Persia) was superior to the native mineral; but supplies of the Mohammedan blue were costly and irregular, and in some of the Ming reigns they were entirely lacking. When it came, this imported blue was, at first at any rate, reserved for the Imperial factory; and it only got into the hands of the private manufacturers by irregular means. If used in the pure state it was apt to run, and stability was got by diluting it more or less with the native cobalt.

The second method of applying pictorial decoration—in enamel colours—is also as old as the Sung Dynasty: see p. 58. Enamels are glassy compounds tinted with mineral oxides, such as that of copper for green and turquoise, of iron or antimony for yellow, of iron for red, and of manganese for a purplish brown. They are applied in liquid form with a brush to the glazed surface, sometimes to a porcelain body which, though fired, is unglazed<sup>1</sup>; and they are submitted to a light firing in a stove or muffle, which fixes them in glassy films on the surface of the porcelain. The blue enamel, derived from cobalt, was a late comer in the Ming palette and when blue was used it was

<sup>1</sup> This is technically known as porcelain biscuit.



"BLUE AND WHITE" PORCELAIN BOTTLE

15TH CENTURY

H. 13 $\frac{1}{4}$  in.

*Sir Percival David Collection, London*

[Face p. 60.]



generally applied under the glaze. Turquoise-green is a feature on the early Ming enamelled porcelain; and the characteristic Ming red, from iron, is a tomato red which develops an iridescent bloom. Gilding was used both in leaf form and painted on with brush. It is fixed by yet another firing at a slightly lower temperature than that required for the enamels.

The third process has a technique intermediate between enamelling and the application of a high-fired felspathic glaze. In it the designs are incised with a point on the unglazed porcelain, carved, cut in openwork or built up in outline with threads of clay: the ware is then slightly hardened in the fire and washes of coloured glaze are applied and kept in place by the incised or raised outlines of the design. Alkaline glazes are used, more refractory than the enamels which have a lead base, but less refractory than the white felspathic porcelain glaze. They are in fact placed for their firing in the cooler parts of the main kiln. Their colours, again derived from mineral oxides, are turquoise-blue, leaf green, yellow, dark violet-blue, aubergine purple and a colourless flux which does duty for white. Parts of the design, especially certain raised or built up elements, are often left in unglazed biscuit.

The combination of two or more colours against a contrasting background is the usual scheme and the term "three colour" (*san ts'ai*) is commonly used to describe this ware. The technique is lacking in the suppleness of brushwork; but the alkaline glazes have splendid depths of colour and make a sumptuous and telling decoration.

There is one branch of the three-colour family which, though probably made elsewhere than at Ching-tê Chén, maintains the highest traditions of Ming ceramics. It has a stoneware, rather than porcelain, body and its coloured glazes have a softer appearance than the normal three-colour glazes and are generally faintly crackled. In the antique trade this ware is distinguished by the name *fa hua*.

Monochrome glazes, though they now hold a secondary place, have by no means ceased to be made. Indeed, some of the Ming cobalt blue and copper red monochromes, especially those of the Hsüan Tê period, were held in high

esteem. There are also effective Ming turquoise and yellow monochromes ; and the plain white, if it can be included, is often of exquisite quality. Witness the white "egg-shell" bowls of the Yung Lo period which are unsurpassed in delicacy. Those, it is true, are not entirely innocent of decoration. When the light shines through their slender sides, it reveals a filmy design traced in white slip or, may be, etched with a needle point beneath the glaze. These half-invisible traceries are appropriately named *an hua* (secret decoration) and they often surprise us by their presence on other monochrome Ming porcelains.

The Ming pictorial porcelains have a freshness and spontaneity in their designs and the charm of individuality in their brushwork, which tend to disappear at a later stage when the processes of manufacture were more rigidly systematized and a whole team of painters took a hand in the decoration of a single piece. Nor is there any lack of delicacy and finish in the superior Ming porcelains, especially in those destined for Imperial use ; and the old notion that Ming wares are apt to be clumsily built and roughly finished is due to the export ware which flooded the markets of Western Asia, India and eventually Europe. For the Imperial factory is only a small part of Ching-tê Chén, and as the industry developed, hundreds of private kilns were built to supply the home and foreign markets. Eventually, we are told, Ching-tê Chén harboured several thousands of kilns and a million souls and all this huge population was engaged in some form or other of ceramic activity.

The only other white porcelain which seriously competed at this time with that of Ching-tê Chén was made at Tê-hua in the province of Fukien. This is the luscious milk white or cream white ware, peculiarly mellow and translucent, which figures in the old French catalogues as *blanc de Chine*. It has a charm that is all its own and it is readily distinguished from the Ching-tê Chén porcelain by the manner in which body and glaze merge insensibly into each other. The Tê-hua porcelain is mainly of an ornamental kind, figures of deities, animals and birds, implements of the writing table, libation cups and the like. Its manufacture has continued to the present day.

Earthenware as distinct from porcelain has never been the monopoly of any particular district in China. It has been made everywhere and no doubt each district has its specialty; but we know only a few of the more prominent types such as have found their way to the export trade in the large ports. Chief of these are the motley-glazed stonewares of Fatshan, near Canton, and the unglazed stoneware made at Yi-hsing in Kiangsu. The latter place supplied the teapots which came to Europe with the first consignments of tea in the seventeenth century. They are usually of a hard red ware, though other colours—brown, buff, fawn and drab—were also made by blending the local clays; and they are decorated with moulded or applied reliefs or incised inscriptions. Glazes imitating the Ko, Kuan and Chün were also used, and, at a later date, enamel decoration. The manufacture started early in the sixteenth century and flourishes to this day.

Chinese ceramic chronicles describe the distinctive features of the porcelain made in the several reigns of the dynasty. Thus the Yung Lo period (1403-24) was noted for its wonderful white "egg-shell" bowls. Examples which may be seen in the Exhibition will show that their merits have not been overrated. The body of the bowls is pared down so thin as to deserve the description *t'o t'ai* (bodiless) and yet on this tenuous frame the Chinese potter has managed to trace a vigorous dragon design in white slip.<sup>1</sup>

The reigns of Hsüan Tê (1426-35) and of Ch'êng Hua (1465-87) were regarded as the classic periods in the ceramics of the dynasty, the blue and white and underglaze red, painted and monochrome, porcelains of the former reign and the enamelled porcelain of the latter receiving special mention. Supplies of Mohammedan blue (p. 60) were available for the Hsüan Tê Imperial porcelain, but they did not arrive again until the sixteenth century. The Hung Chih (1488-1505) and the Chêng Tê (1506-21) periods were noted for yellow-glazed wares; and Mohammedan blue appears again in the reigns of Chêng Tê and Chia Ching (1522-66). In the latter reign we are told that the best kaolin deposits, those at Ma-ts'ang, were seriously

<sup>1</sup> See p. 62.

depleted and we expect to notice a falling off in the quality of the porcelain from this time onward. None the less the Chia Ching wares have a high reputation, especially for blue and white and enamelled decoration and for a fine blue monochrome glaze. The Chia Ching Mohammedan blue is a dark violet-blue of great intensity, and its use seems to have extended beyond the Imperial factory. It is said that the potters of this time found difficulty in producing the underglaze copper red and that the over-glaze red, derived from iron, was generally used in its place. This latter colour, a fine, lustrous tomato red, certainly played a prominent part in the enamelled decoration of the time, and the Chia Ching red and gold porcelains are prized to-day, especially by Japanese collectors.

The Chia Ching Mohammedan blue continued in use in the short reign of Lung Ch'ing (1567-72) and even on some of the Wan Li wares. The latter reign (1573-1619) was noted for the variety of its productions, though the quality of the porcelain generally is less high. Porcelains with enamelled designs supplemented by underglaze blue are so characteristic of this period that their scheme of decoration is known generally as *wan li wu ts'ai* (the Wan Li five colours).

The decorative motives of the Ming porcelain were derived from many sources, well-known pictures, illustrated romances, etc., and sometimes from designs specially painted for the purpose by the Court artists. Many more, especially the intricate diapers and border patterns, were borrowed from silk brocades and textiles, from bronzes and the stock in trade of jade carvers and lacquerers. Doubtless the standard designs were collected at the factories and preserved in pattern books.

The true Chinese decoration, such as appears on the porcelain made for native consumption, is never without a specific meaning. Its mission is not only to delight the eye but to convey a message to the mind, though naturally this refinement is not always appreciated by the foreigner. Figure subjects allude to familiar romances, to folk-lore and to mythology; landscapes recall famous scenery or pictures; birds and animals have a symbolic or religious significance; and flowers and trees embody some bene-

PLATE XIV



PORCELAIN VASE: PRUNUS DESIGN ON GREEN GROUND

PERIOD OF K'ANG HSI (A.D. 1662-1722)

H. 16·9 in.

*British Museum, London  
(Franks Collection)*

[*Face p. 64.*



volent symbolism. Thus the dragon which brings the fertilizing rain is a beneficent monster, and it is also the emblem of the emperor as the *fēng huang* or phoenix is that of the Empress : the lion, horse and elephant are sacred to Buddha, and the stork, tortoise and spotted deer are familiars of the Taoist god of long life : the pine tree, the fungus, the peach and the gourd are among the many emblems of longevity. The salmon trying to leap the falls of Lung Mén symbolizes the aspirant to scholastic honours ; and the cassia tree is an emblem of literary success. Happiness is symbolized by the bat and the finger citron, fertility by the pomegranate and the double fish, and wedded bliss by a pair of mandarin ducks.

Many allusions too are based on plays upon words to which the Chinese language, abounding as it does in homophones, is particularly prone. A simple instance is the use of the bat (*fu*) as already stated to suggest another *fu* (happiness). Even the subsidiary, border patterns are not without a meaning. The key-fret, or meander, is the "cloud and thunder" pattern which like the dragon bespeaks the fertilizing rain : the motive of the "cash" pattern is the Chinese copper coin, or cash, and hints at wealth ; and the *ju-i* border is a repetition of the head of the *ju-i* staff which grants all wishes. Pages might be written to explain Chinese ornament and its symbolism ; but we have only space here to call attention to its interest and importance.

#### K'ANG HSI AND AFTER

In 1644 the native Mings gave way to the Manchu Dynasty which ruled under the name of *Ch'ing* (pure) till 1912, with its capital at Peking.

The opening years of the new dynasty were not propitious for the ceramic industry. The provinces were unsettled during the difficult period of pacification ; and the rebellion of Wu San Kuei between 1673 and 1681 actually involved the town of Ching-tê Chén in wholesale destruction. In 1680, however, the Imperial factory was rebuilt and its management placed again in capable hands, and under its lead a period of unexampled prosperity began for the whole

town. From now till 1750 a succession of gifted men administered the Imperial works, Ts'ang Ying-hsüan (appointed in 1682), Nien Hsi-yao (appointed in 1723), and, greatest of all, T'ang Ying who had charge from 1736 to 1749. T'ang Ying was versed in every detail of the industry, and he has left us full and illuminating accounts of the processes which he supervised.

The porcelain of this period is notable for its refinement of material, accurate finish and assured technique, in a word for perfection more than for originality. There were few processes used that would have been entirely new to the Ming potters, and the ambition of the K'ang Hsi potters was to equal the Ming standards.

K'ang Hsi blue and white is distinguished by its beautiful body material and pure limpid glaze and by its brilliant sapphire blue, obtained by elaborate purification of the native cobalt. Its decoration consists chiefly of Ming designs rendered with a rather mechanical accuracy and lacking in freshness. The polychrome porcelains are conspicuous for the beauty and brilliance of their enamels, among which a fine enamel blue and coral red are distinguishing features.

The K'ang Hsi enamels, like the Ming, are of the translucent kind, comprising blue, yellow, aubergine purple, several pleasing shades of green and a beautiful black which is formed by coating a dry manganese black pigment with transparent green enamel. The predominance of green in this palette has earned the name of *famille verte* for the typical K'ang Hsi enamelled porcelain. The colours of this group are either painted over the finished glaze, or applied in broad washes over designs pencilled in black on the unglazed biscuit (Pl. XIV). Both methods have their advantages and the jewel-like brilliance of the enamels on the glaze is rivalled by the softer harmonies of the on-biscuit polychrome. The latter process has the advantage when applied to statuettes and intricately moulded objects, the sharpness of which is apt to be lost under a double covering of glaze and enamel.

The early K'ang Hsi polychromes are distinguished by bold designs and broad washes of colour. The egg-shell porcelains with delicate brushwork in pale enamels, of which

the Imperial birthday plates are notable examples, belonging to the closing period of the reign. About this time, too, rose-pinks make their first appearance, heralding a new style which took a firm hold in the ensuing reigns.

Monochromes in great variety were made throughout the K'ang Hsi period, some of the most successful being the ox-blood red, a rival of the old Hsüan Tê red glaze, and known as *lang yao* (Lang's ware): the peach-bloom, a pinkish red usually variegated with areas of green and spots of russet brown; a brilliant "mirror" black; and powder-blue. In the last-mentioned, the blue is blown in a fine dust on to the unglazed porcelain and it maintains its powdery texture after it has been glazed and fired. Other successful monochromes of the time were turquoise blue and yellow; but there are many others which space forbids us to enumerate.

Some of the dainty little objects, such as snuff bottles, the furniture of the writing table, tiny vases for a single flower, incense burners, water pots, brush washers, etc., were often made of a special composition, opaque in body but light in weight and with a glaze which is usually minutely crackled. These are the "paste bodied" (*chiang t'ai*) wares which American collectors call "soft paste" porcelains. Some are painted in underglaze blue; and others have delicious cream-white glazes rivalling the Sung Ting wares. But it is impossible in a short treatise to do justice to the variety of porcelains made in this prolific period.

In the succeeding reign of Yung Chêng (1723-35) the porcelain made under the direction of Nien Hsi-yao included monochromes of great beauty and exquisite finish. Much ingenuity too was used in the imitation of the classic Sung and Ming wares, models for this purpose being sent to Ching-tê Chén from the Palace itself.

Among the polychromes was a group in which the delicate enamels of the late *famille verte* were used to fill in designs outlined in underglaze blue. This kind of decoration, known as *tou ts'ai*, is a revival of a Ch'êng Hua specialty.

But a new kind of enamel-decoration was now firmly established in the popular favour. The translucent colours of the *famille verte* were superseded by a palette of opaque

enamels in which a variety of rose-pinks derived from gold gave the dominant note. Their appearance was already remarked at the end of the preceding reign and they now reached full development in a family which the Chinese call *juan ts'ai* (soft colours) or *yang ts'ai* (foreign colours) and the Europeans *famille rose*.

About this time too a school of painting in European style was established in the Palace precincts at Peking. Castiglione (Lang Shih Ning), Gherardini and Belleville are names associated with its institution ; and its influence is reflected in a special kind of polychrome porcelain in which semi-European designs are conspicuous. The material chosen for their display is a dead white glassy ware of great beauty and purity, and the enamels used are a mixed palette of *famille rose* and *famille verte* colours. The painting is the work of artists and is often of consummate delicacy, though the inclusion of European figures adds little to its charm ; and some of its most attractive specimens are those on which rocks, trees and flowering plants are the theme (Pl. XV). A stanza of verse, with small red seals attached, usually completes the decoration ; and under the base is the mark of the Yung Chêng or Ch'ien Lung period in raised enamel.

This attractive group, perhaps the most artistic of all the late polychrome porcelains, is known by the name Ku-yüeh-hsüan<sup>1</sup> ware. We cannot stop to debate the meaning of this term, of which at least three widely differing explanations are given by Chinese critics. The name of a famous glass-maker who painted in this style ; the name of a Palace pavilion where the finer enamelled wares were stored ; the name of a ceramic artist specially engaged on this class of work, are all offered as rival suggestions.

The activities of T'ang Ying maintained the high standard of the Imperial wares in the first part of the long reign of Ch'ien Lung (1736-95), and wonderful technical triumphs and *tours de force* were achieved. Vases with pierced outer casings which revolved to show the interior decoration are miracles of craftsmanship. Crackle graded at will : the perfect control of variegated or *flambé* glazes ; and realistic imitations of alien substances such as bronze, jade, *cloisonné* enamel, grained wood, lacquer and shell, show a complete

<sup>1</sup> Lit. " Ancient Moon Terrace ".

PLATE XV



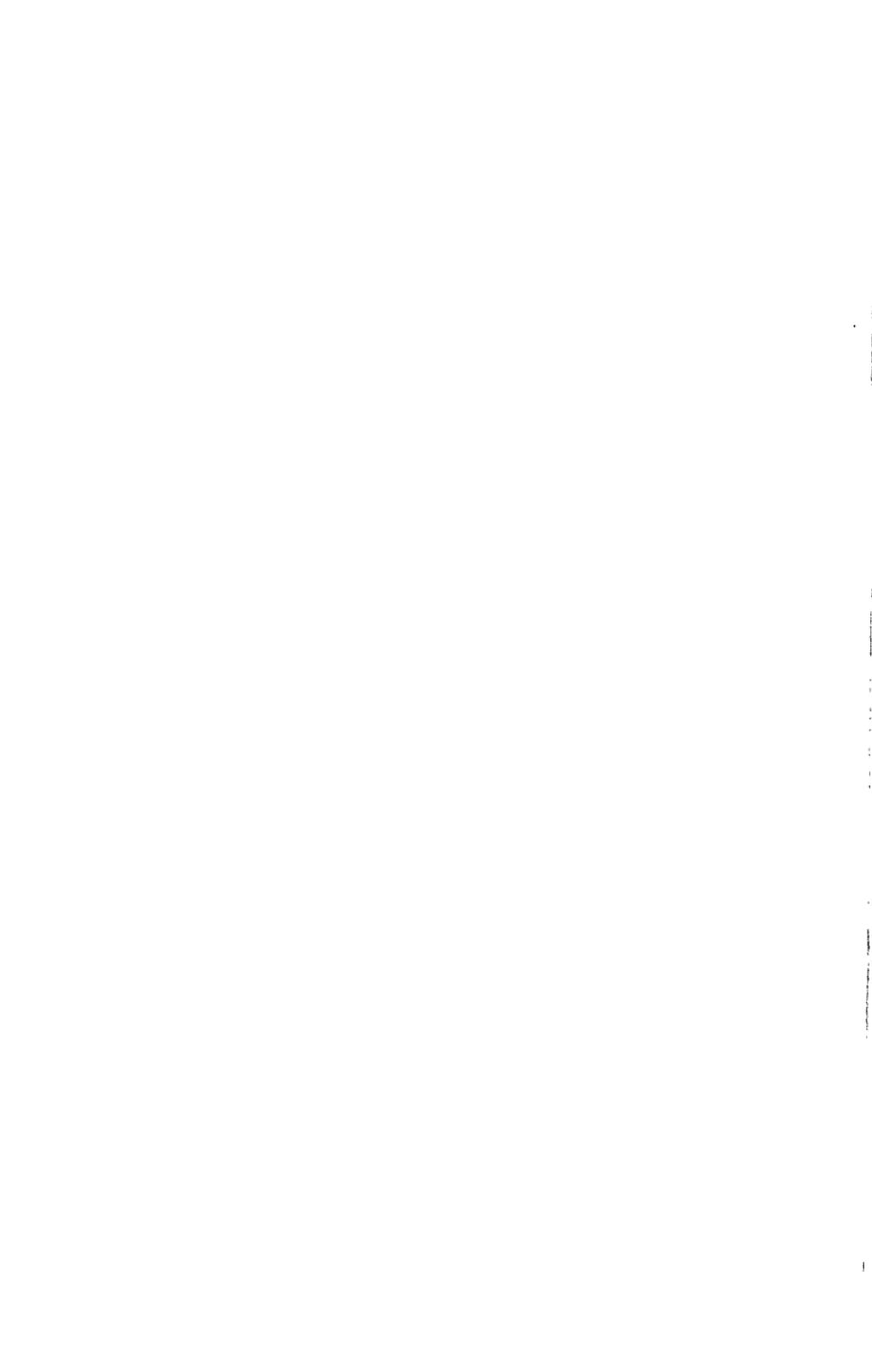
PORCELAIN BOTTLE, ENAMELLED IN KU-YUEH-HSUAN STYLE

MIDDLE OF 18TH CENTURY

H. 3'55 in.

*Sir Percival David Collection, London*

[*Face p. 68.*



mastery of material and technique. But the art had already become too sophisticated. Over-decoration, excessive imitation of the antique and the prevalence of bronze shapes and other artificialities are symptoms of degeneration. There is no denying the marvellous skill of the Ch'ien Lung potters and the exquisite finish of their work, but the industry was already in decline by the end of the reign ; and though much of their manual skill was retained by the Imperial potters in the succeeding reigns of Chia Ch'ing and Tao Kuang, their work is uninspired and lacking in interest.

In the first half of the Ch'ing Dynasty, with the growth of the East India Companies, trade with Europe assumed large dimensions, and the results of this intercourse were not always artistically wholesome. The European merchants, who sent large orders to Ching-tê Chén, too often had a craving for the strange and grotesque ; and there is no doubt that the Chinese manufacturers pandered to their taste. Much of the export ware even of the K'ang Hsi period is needlessly complicated in form and its decoration is confused and meaningless, for the Chinese doubtless felt that symbolism would be wasted on the " Western barbarian ". Beautiful porcelains were not lacking among the export wares and indeed even the un-Chinese specimens are redeemed to a certain extent by excellence of material and pleasing colour ; but the hybrid wares were sufficiently numerous to create a false impression of Chinese art, that of the trivial *Chinoiserie* and the *magot*, which prevailed so long in Europe and which it is hoped that the Exhibition at Burlington House will finally eradicate.

Nor need we dwell on the mass of export goods decorated in the enamelling establishments at Canton<sup>1</sup> which thrrove on the orders of the foreign merchants. The best of these are the " ruby back " " egg-shell " plates and tea services richly, often too richly, decorated in *famille rose* enamels with pictures of Chinese interiors framed in many intricate border patterns. Here too were executed most of the orders for table services with armorial designs copied from patterns sent out from Europe, and also most of those curious porcelains with reproductions of European prints and drawings or

<sup>1</sup> The actual porcelain was supplied from Ching-tê Chén.

with quaint and often mocking representations of European life and manners as they appeared to Chinese eyes. Needless to add these have no relationship with the Ku-yüeh-hsüan wares.

The more exhaustive works on Chinese ceramics devote a chapter to the marks on pottery and porcelain, and there are manuals in which the reader can find them tabulated in fairly complete lists. Reference in this sketch is only to the reign-marks, the commonest, and at the same time most useful, of the various inscriptions and seals which appear (usually on the base) of ceramic objects. These marks give the period name (*nien hao*) of the Emperor in whose reign the specimen in question is presumed to have been made; but they are no guarantee of correct dating, for the marks of classic reigns such as Hsüan Tê and Ch'êng Hua were freely used at all times.

### GLASS

The early history of glass-making in China has yet to be written. Records of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) and of the Three Kingdoms (A.D. 220-64) only refer to glass as an importation from Syria (*Ta-ch'in*) or the Roman Empire. The Northern and Southern Histories of the fifth century make simultaneous claims, the one that the art was introduced at Ta-t'ung Fu, in Shansi, by traders, and the other that it came first by sea to Nanking, presumably from Egypt or Persia. It is certain that Arab glass was carried to the Far East in the eighth century, for several pieces of it are preserved in the Shōsō-in at Nara, in Japan, where they were deposited about A.D. 750.

But these considerations are no longer of more than secondary interest, for recent excavations near Loyang have proved definitely that the manufacture of glass existed in China at least as early as the third century B.C. The glass objects found in the tombs at Chin-ts'un and elsewhere, mostly cheap substitutes for jade, are purely Chinese things which could hardly have been made outside China. Some of them are of clear glass (*p'o li*) and others of opaque glass paste (*liu li*).

We may assume that the manufacture continued from

this time onwards, even if for a long while it attained no great importance ; but we have little news of it until the twelfth century when the city of Djankou (?) Hangchow) is mentioned as a glass-making centre by the Arab geographer, Edrisi. Nor is the veil finally lifted till the Ch'ing Dynasty, when we see the glass industry in full activity at Po-shan Hsien in Shantung, the Ching-tê Chén of glass makers. Here glass of all kinds and colours is (and has been, perhaps for centuries) manufactured from local materials. Much of it is sent in a raw state to Peking where it is worked up into artistic shapes.

Among the many crafts established in the Palace precincts about 1680 by the Emperor K'ang Hsi was a glass-makers' atelier which supplied the Imperial needs. Hu, a celebrated director of this factory about 1730, is reputed to have excelled in fashioning opaque glass vessels with carved designs and in painting clear glass with enamel colours. One of the traditional explanations of the term Ku-yüeh-hsüan porcelain<sup>1</sup> is that it was made by Imperial command to imitate Hu's enamelled glass. Be this as it may, the Chinese in the eighteenth century were adepts at all the glass-making processes—blowing, pressing and casting in moulds. They made beautiful semi-opaque glass tinted throughout with brilliant colours, and they were able with it to imitate hard stones of all kinds, such as onyx, agate and jade, so closely that only scientific tests reveal their real nature. They are specially skilful in carving the opaque glass in high relief, for which they use the lapidary's wheel, treating the material like jade ; and they show their dexterity by the astonishing feat of painting enamelled designs on the interiors of snuff-bottles and other small-mouthed vessels.

Few of the specimens in our collections have reign-marks earlier than Yung Chêng or Ch'ien Lung.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 68 : the Chinese character for Hu is composed of two parts which read, when separated, *ku yüeh* (ancient moon).

## BRONZES AND CLOISONNÉ ENAMEL

*by*

A. J. KOOP

CHINESE BRONZES, as we know them, may be broadly divided into two classes : (a) those which have been above ground since the day they were made, and (b) those which have been rescued from age-long burial in the soil of China.

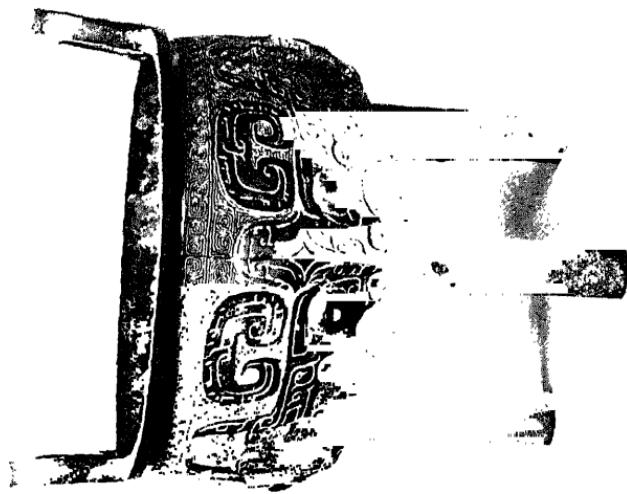
It is to the latter group that collectors and critics specifically refer when speaking of "Chinese Bronzes"—or they may qualify them as Ancient Chinese Bronzes and contemptuously dismiss the other group as "Modern", even if this elastic term has to be stretched to cover the last thousand years.

There is, indeed, this excuse for the contempt, that the bronzes of the last millennium are, both as to design and to ornamentation, the merest pale echoes, if not travesties, of the majestic products of the Ancient group.

One other feature differentiates the excavated bronze from its fellow that has not known burial—and that is *patination*. A "modern" bronze may display the natural patination of air, wear and age—after all, we are allowing it a life of up to a thousand years. But however old, this surface coloration will, at a glance, be seen to be entirely different from that of a burial piece. The difference may, perhaps, call for a closer examination when the excavated example is one that was recovered centuries ago and has since lived in Chinese collections, scoured and polished to a dark colour as is the way with such pieces. With the result of a recent excavation, however, to which, as is now happily the custom, the minimum of cleaning has been applied, the quality and consistence of its patination are unmistakable,

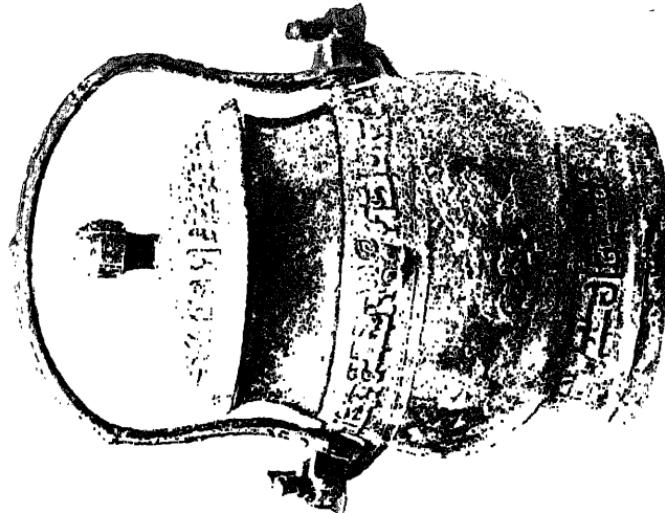
PLATE XVI

(a)



BRONZE TING  
CHOU DYNASTY (1122-249 B.C.)  
H. 7 in.

(b)



BRONZE YU  
CHOU DYNASTY (1122-249 B.C.)  
H. 14 in.

*Victoria and Albert Museum, London*

[Face p. 72.



and, so science tells us, absolutely uncopiable—to the confusion of the forger.

If we are to credit the native tradition, the art of casting in bronze goes back in China to at least the third millennium before Christ. The Emperor Ta Yü (Yü the Great), who founded the first Chinese dynasty, the Hsia, in 2205 B.C., is said to have called in the tribute metal from his nine provinces and to have had fashioned therefrom nine great *ting* (tripod caldrons) in bronze, of the type used for cooking sacrificial viands. The story even includes an account of the designs with which they were ornamented. Another thousand years or more were to pass before the authentic history of China can be said to begin; but thenceforward the nine *ting* find continuous mention in the native annals, being regarded as royal insignia or as palladia of the empire and given an honourable place at all the great state functions. They seem to have disappeared in 233 B.C., during the troublous times that heralded the fall of the Chou Dynasty. Then we learn that Shih Huang Ti, the "First Emperor", founder of the Ch'in Dynasty, hearing that they had been thrown into the River Ssu, made several efforts to retrieve them, but without success.

It is clear, then, that the casting of bronze vessels can be carried back in China to a very considerable antiquity. Nevertheless, no collector or critic has ever been hardy enough to assign to any particular example of Chinese bronzework a date earlier than that of the Shang Dynasty. Furthermore, astonishing as it may seem, no Chinese bronze has yet been discovered which one could label with certainty as a "primitive". The story apparently begins with examples showing such technical skill and elaboration of design as to postulate a long antecedent period of evolution and development. Perhaps, when scientifically organized excavation has been done on a sufficiently extensive scale we may come nearer to a solution of this vexed question of the origin of Chinese bronzes.

#### COMPOSITION AND PATINATION OF ANCIENT BRONZES

Apart from a handful of mirrors, no scientific investigation has as yet been conducted as regards the composition

of the material used for Ancient Bronzes. The word "bronze" itself is, of course, a very elastic one, covering alloys of copper and tin in varying proportions, with the possible addition, intentional or otherwise, of "impurities" such as lead, zinc, nickel, antimony, silver, and even gold. To judge the date of a bronze by an analysis of its metal would require (a) a knowledge of the alloy proportions in use at different periods, and (b) the examination and analysis of a sufficient number of extant pieces, the dating of which is for one reason or another certain. As to (a), we have no records worth taking into account; and as to (b), the number of these "dated" pieces is as yet so small that the time is not by any means ripe for the desired investigation.

There is thus at present nothing but the state and appearance of the bronze and its patination to enable us to judge of the age of a particular specimen. Scientists will tell us that by a careful analysis of the patina the *minimum* length of time a bronze has been buried can be calculated, but that is as far as they will go. Consequently the melancholy fact remains that, with very few exceptions, the safest way to date an Ancient Bronze is to call it "Ancient Chinese" and leave it at that—unless one labels it "date doubtful", a course which has the virtue of frankness.

#### METHODS OF CASTING AND INLAY

The earliest form of casting practised by man involved the pouring of the molten metal into a natural or artificially made hollow in a stone. At some later period man's ingenuity would give rise to the invention of the two-piece mould, by which means a spear or arrow-head, a sword, a hoe or an axe could be cast with two properly finished sides, so that no great amount of hand work was necessary to complete the task.

But the almost universal method employed in China for the casting of large hollow objects, even for those which are obviously of very early date, is the *cera perduta* or "lost-wax" technique. This highly developed and complicated process involves the formation of a core of suitable fire-resistant material, the building up over this of a wax model

of what it is required to reproduce in bronze, and the covering of this wax replica with a continuous and unbroken fire-proof mould. The resultant cast, if skilfully produced, would require but little finishing off by hand—mainly only where necessitated by certain technical details of the process.

A form of decoration found especially on the later bronzes, but thought by some to date back as far as the Han Dynasty, is that of inlaying. The inlaid material, if gold, silver or copper, may be applied in two ways: (a) by being hammered into channels cut in the bronze, after which the whole is polished to a flush surface; (b) by being hammered on to a ground burred to a file-like condition by repeated chisel strokes in various directions. The former appears to be the earlier process of the two. Inlays of malachite, turquoise and similar stones required the cutting both of the inlay material and of hollows in the bronze to the desired design and the use of some mucilaginous material to hold the former in place. Inlays of paste compositions would require no previous shaping for themselves and no special medium to hold them in place.

#### TYPES OF ANCIENT CHINESE BRONZES

Ancient bronzes may be classified in several ways—by date, by style, and by type. The last, being considerably the most certain of these three ways, will be dealt with here first.

If we examine the main types of Chinese bronzes (including, besides vessels, such things as bells and other musical instruments, swords, halberd-heads, etc.), we can set out at least fifty, distinctive as to shape and use; and to these the Chinese have given names which, though nearly all monosyllabic, are, it is a pleasant surprise to find, all different. (Those acquainted with the peculiar nature of the language might well have expected a number of them to sound alike to our ears and to be distinguishable only by being written with different ideographs.) In default of suitable English names for most of the types, the use of these Chinese designations becomes inevitable and indeed convenient; and it is therefore fortunate that it involves no awkward reference to the Chinese character.

Here is a list of the chief types, with their descriptions and uses.

(a) VESSELS FOR COOKING AND SERVING FOOD, BOTH FOR RELIGIOUS AND SECULAR PURPOSES

*Ting*.—A hemispherical (or rectangular) bowl set on three (or four) tall legs and having two loop handles rising either from the rim or (L-shaped) from just below it. This would stand over a fire and (when hot) be lifted by a rod passed through the handles. In the earlier examples the legs are stout vertical cylinders set directly on the lower curve of the body ; in the rectangular variety they may be cylinders or curved straps built up of monster forms. A cover may also be found with later versions of the *ting*, forming a low dish when reversed and supported on its three knobs as feet or else on its central flat knob as a single foot. In these cases the legs would distinctly recall those of bulls, swelling considerably at the top and spreading hoof-like below.

The *ting* has provided a favourite prototype for the incense- or perfume-burner of recent centuries. Presumably the raised legs would prevent the heat from damaging the wooden table on which the burner was placed.

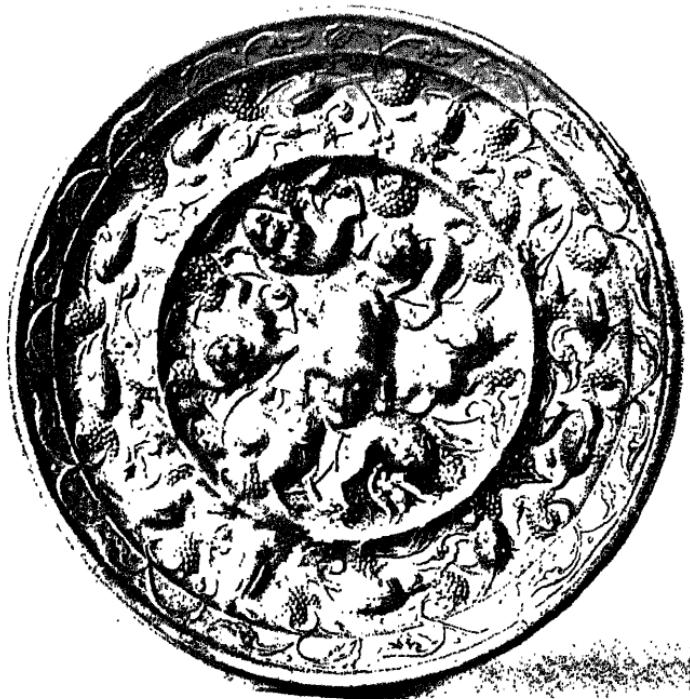
The average size of the *ting* is nine or ten inches in height, the width varying according to the sub-type.

*Li*.—The *li* differs essentially from the *ting* in that the upper parts of the legs are hollow and merge into the interior of the body, thus permitting of rapid boiling. The legs (three or four) may be somewhat shorter, or they may taper to a point below.

*Yen* or *Hsien*.—This is a sort of steamer for vegetables and cereals, its lower part being practically a three-legged *li* above which rises a bowl of inverted bell shape with two loop handles of curved L-shape rising from below the rim. In some examples a hinged grid (*pei*) separates the upper and lower parts.

*Tui*.—The *tui* was used to hold cereals for ritual or domestic purposes. A more or less hemispherical bowl, supported on a slightly spreading hollow foot and having an expanded lip and two lateral loop handles, each of which springs from a dragon's head and usually has at its lower

PLATE XVII



MIRROR: BRONZE, THE BACK SILVERED

T'ANG DYNASTY (A.D. 618-906)

Diam. 4·8 in.

*Victoria and Albert Museum, London*

[*Face p. 76.*



part an oblong pendent projection. A sub-type has a heavy rectangular stand cast in one piece with it. Another has three dragon-head feet resting on the main ring foot and usually projecting well below it.

*Fu* and *Kuei*.—Used like the *tui* for holding cooked cereals. The *fu* is an oblong tray with straight steeply sloping sides, a dragon-head loop handle at each end, and a spreading hollow foot cut away in the centre of each side in a more or less ornamental contour. The *kuei* is somewhat similar, but has a more rounded form.

*Tou*.—Also used for holding cooked food, the *tou* is composed of moderately shallow circular bowl with cover of similar form, raised on a bold trumpet-shaped foot. The cover, reversible to serve as a dish, would be provided with a central knob or three knobs or loops in the field, as in the case of the later *ting*.

*P'u*.—Cognate with the *tou*, but having the bowl very shallow (and with upright side) and the spreading foot wider above and pierced in openwork.

#### (b) VESSELS FOR CONTAINING, HEATING AND DRINKING LIQUIDS

*Lei*.—Under this term are described large vases of ovoid form with constricted neck and usually a domed cover and two or more ring or loop handles on the shoulder. Probably these vessels were used as containers from which wine or water was poured into smaller vessels such as the next.

*Hu*.—Somewhat similar vessels of smaller size, usually without cover.

*Yu*.—This important and fairly common type, easily identified in all its varying forms, can be described briefly in six words—"a covered jar with swing handle". Normally it has a squat bulbous body of oval section, and the deeply overfitting cover has a bold knob to lift it by; the handle, of broad U-shape ends in animal heads and is linked to two loops on the shoulder. Ordinarily these loops are at the narrower sides of the vessel, an inconvenient position if the *yu* were intended to be held by the handle and tilted with the free hand so as to release the liquid contents. It seems clear, however, that removal of the wine at ceremonies was performed with the aid of a ladle or dipper.

Variations from this normal type show a pear-shaped or cylindrical body, and the solid handle may be replaced by a curved yoke-bar and two lengths of chain.

*Ho*.—The *ho* was used for mixing—and apparently warming—wine and water. The term describes a number of vessels for all of which either “teapot” or “kettle” would serve as a rough designation; that is to say, they have a handle, a moderately small cover, and a spout. The earlier of two sub-types into which we may divide the *ho* has a bulbous or pear-shaped body raised on three (or four) plain legs, a straight spout of medium length, a loop handle perhaps issuing from an animal’s head, and a domed cover provided with a small loop and often attached to the body by a link of chain. The length of the legs would point to this form of *ho* being placed over a charcoal fire to heat the contents, but the lack of insulation for the handle is a difficulty.

The later *ho* have an oblate spheroidal body, with narrow mouth capped by a flattish cover, three short legs, a bird-headed spout, and an arching handle of dracontine design. The handle is either fixed or linked to the body, and the cover is often attached by a link of chain. The legs may be of animal form, and the cover-knob formed as a monkey.

*Chüeh*.—Probably the most curious-looking and unconventional of all the types is the *chüeh*. It may be shortly described as of inverted helmet shape, the “helmet” in this case being of exaggerated proportions, with rounded crown of extra depth and sloping peak and nape-guard (spout) of unusual length, the former sharply pointed. Centrally above the rim rise two knobbed bars. At the front of the body (spout to the left) is a small loop handle, and the whole rests on three straddling legs, which are of triangular section and taper to a point. The use of the *chüeh* was to warm wine over a small fire after pouring part of it in libation. For the latter purpose the side handle and the big spout were admirably adapted, while the vessel when hot could be lifted by two rods or a forked rod passed underneath the knobs. Usually the surface is quite plain; if there is any ornament it is confined to the upper part of the body, the spout and peak being rarely, the legs never, decorated. *Chüeh* average about seven and a half inches in height.

*Ku*.—The *ku* shares with the *ting* the distinction of being one of the most widely copied types throughout all the centuries that followed its first introduction. Its wide-flaring trumpet mouth and spreading hollow foot, with intermediate knob of cylindrical or slightly swelling form, make up a design capable of exhibiting the utmost grace and subtlety of curve. Apparently the *ku* was used in early times for sacrificial wine, being held by the knob and waved about before the spirits of the ancestors—hence, perhaps, the wide mouth to prevent spilling. Recent centuries have found in it a favourite shape for the flower vase.

(c) VESSELS USED FOR THE WASHING OF HANDS AT FEASTS

*I*.—Vessels of jug or ewer type are usually described under the name of *i*, and most of them may be regarded as intended for water used in the washing of hands at ceremonies or feasts. Two main sub-types are to be found. In the first an oblong hollow foot supports the belly of the vessel, which is also generally oblong, but with slightly swelling sides; above this, rather oval in plan, rise the bold spreading neck and mouth, the profile of the lip forming a bold ogee curve. The loop handle is of the usual long-tongued dragon design; but it is the cover that gives this sub-type its characteristic touch. Following the same sweeping curve as that of the lip, it is fashioned, spoutwards, as the head of an ox, and at the other end as an eared monster of less certain identity. These ears and the horns of the ox serve the cover for feet when it is reversed as a dish.

The other sub-type inevitably calls for the description “sauce-boat”. There is no cover; the supports are of indeterminate animal form, and the dragon head of the handle does not turn outwards, but is set higher and peers into the hollow of the vessel.

*P'an*.—A fairly large (average diameter fifteen inches), shallow, circular bowl or dish, usually with two strong L-shaped loop handles and a ring foot.

*Hsiian* and *Hsi*.—Names applied to circular bowls of various depths, usually footless, and sometimes provided with a couple of loose ring handles.

## (d) MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

*Chung*.—A clapperless bell, struck from without at a point near the lip. Four sub-types are to be distinguished. In the first the body is of bi-convex section, slightly tapering upwards with straight side. The lower edge is incurved so as to form two sharp points to right and left. The shoulder is flat and above it rises a tall stout stem, plain but for a moulding about its middle from which springs a loop on the side corresponding to the front of the bell. Both back and front are set with blunt spikes or "nipples" in three groups of three on each side of the median line. (The use of these spikes was apparently to tune the bell by filing them away.) Ornament—necessarily kept very flat—is applied usually to the front (only) of the body and to the flat shoulder.

The second sub-type is more decorative. The side, instead of being straight, swells boldly. The stem is moulded and the loop is of animal form. The nipples are less prominent and receive decoration.

In the third sub-type the body also swells, but its lower edge is straight, and the stem is replaced by a "canon" formed by two monsters. In the fourth the canon is a mere loop, but the lower edge is once more incurved.

*Chêng*.—Also a clapperless bell, similar to the first sub-type of the *chung*, but without either the spikes or the stem-loop.

*Shun*.—The body is oval in section, almost cylindrical below and of inverted pear shape above; the flat top has a raised edge and the canon is the standing figure of an animal, usually recognizable as a tiger. Normally the *shun* is quite plain.

*Ling*.—A name, obviously of echoic origin, given to small bells of the jingle variety—a hollow sphere containing a loose ball. An interesting use of it is on the *ch'i-ling* or banner-jingle—a short curved bar with a C-shaped rod rising from each end and terminating in a small *ling*. This is said to have been used in some way—presumably as a finial—on banner-poles.

*Nao*.—A small rattle socketed for use on a staff. Above the nearly square tapering socket rises a circular or oval disk of which the central part swells out to form a rounded

PLATE XVIII



BRONZE TSUN, INLAID WITH SILVER AND GOLD

SUNG DYNASTY (A.D. 960-1279)

H. 19 in.

*Victoria and Albert Museum*



cage containing a loose ball. The cage has on each face seven or eight radiating slots and a central circular hole; the border of the disk is also slotted. The socket is pierced for rivets and may be ribbed; sometimes it shows small raised spindle shapes, but there is no other decoration. According to one authority, the *nao* was used both in battle and at the dance as a sort of "cease fire" signal. In each field a drum would give the signal to advance or to begin the dance, while the *nao* would call a halt or order the dance to cease. Others think these objects are only jingles for chariots and should be called *ch'ê-luan* ("carriage-bells").

*T'ung-ku*.—These were cast with the single head and the body in one piece. The former is flat and circular; the latter is of varying profile, but is generally swelling above, concave in the middle and spreading below. On the shoulder two pairs of strap-like handles would enable the drum to be carried between two men and struck by a third. The head may be nearly flush, or it may project for an inch or so. (Examples are known with Chinese dates inscribed below this projection.) Its surface is covered with flat relief ornament of unusual and very conventionalized form, disposed in concentric bands radiating from a central star. The body may have similar ornament, either all over or in separate horizontal bands. On the head near the edge stand figures of frogs, usually four in number.

Weapons include Swords (short, straight, two-edged), Axe-heads, and Halberd-blades (with transverse tang to pass through the shaft and be fastened by a wedge as well as by raw-hide thongs). The Crossbow-lock is often met with. This has a stout double hook to catch the bowstring, a lever to pull it into the firing position, and a trigger to release it. This ingenious mechanization of the plain bow is almost certainly of Chinese origin, and literary references carry it back to at least the second century B.C.

*Mirrors*.—Ancient Chinese mirrors are circular (rarely square) disks with a central pierced knob at the back through which a short thong or cord could be passed to form a hand-grip. The back may be otherwise plain, but in by far the greater number of instances it is cast with concentric

bands of ornament and inscription, introducing new *motifs* totally unlike those of the early ritual and domestic vessels.

*Girdle-hooks*.—These small objects are generally constructed as a curved bar, variously ornamented with designs in relief or in inlay of gold, silver, malachite, turquoise, etc. At the back is a stud for a button-hole, and the bar continues tapering towards an upturned hook of animal or bird head form.

### ORNAMENTAL STYLES OF ANCIENT BRONZES

Whilst it is possible for a bronze to be entirely plain and devoid of ornament, the great majority are provided with decoration of some sort.

Four well-marked styles of ornament are distinguishable. It is unfortunate that, owing to the lack of *absolute* dates, the exact time-relationship of these four styles is not easy to determine, and while those styles which are given first and fourth places in the following description are without question respectively the earliest and latest in point of date, there is considerable uncertainty as to the relative time-position occupied by the other two. There may, of course, be a certain amount of overlapping.

*The First Style*.—Here the ornament is characterized by two features: (a) a combination of high and low relief, and (b) vertical flanges.

(a) The relief ornament may be either disposed over the whole surface available for decoration, or it may be confined to horizontal bands or to vertical leaf-shaped ("cicada") panels—the latter especially in the case of trumpet-shaped vases. The more prominent part of the relief usually consists of symmetrically disposed details of the so-called "ogre-mask" or boldly curving "dragon" forms. The less prominent is a ground-filling of the fine linear squared-spiral ornament known as "thunder pattern". The normal combination of these shows the higher relief well raised above the other, but this "high" relief may be flattened until it is actually no higher than the low (except, perhaps, for the "eyes" of the dragon or mask), though it retains its due prominence in the design. In that case it is usually centrally grooved. Sometimes the high relief is

there alone—or *vice versa*, the high surviving only in the aforementioned “eyes”. Very infrequently the high relief, instead of having the usual plain rounded surface is covered with a diaper of the low-relief thunder-scrolls.

(b) The provision of vertical flanges is another very characteristic feature of this style. The relative size of these flanges varies widely in different pieces and is not necessarily in proportion to the prominence or otherwise of the other ornament. Occasionally they may be replaced by animal masks. Their decorative treatment also varies considerably. When small, they are usually plain and of rounded section. The larger tend to be grooved, combed, or hooked.

The ornament in general is stiff and hieratic. Its details are symmetrically disposed and oriented on prominent parts of the vessel.

*The “Second” Style.*—In strong contrast with that of the First, all ornament tends to be very flat, and, though symmetrically disposed, is not oriented on particular points. All boldness disappears and rigid strength gives way to grace and elegance. Any animal forms that may be represented have a tame, almost lap-dog appearance. Bands of dragon-forms are a common feature, the creatures being massed together in large numbers and interlaced in squared-up pairs. Narrow strap-like bands are given a feathered or rope-patterned surface, and granulated grounds are frequent. Bold monster-headed loop handles, such as are common in the First Style, here give way to small rings, often incised with fine linear ornament.

*The “Third” Style.*—This style comes nearer, if not in time (that is a point which has still to be cleared up), at any rate in spirit, to the First than does the “Second”. There is a return to breadth and vigour, but a lack of refinement in detail. The regular alternation or combination of high and low relief characteristic of the First Style is now replaced by broad and shallow strapwork designs. A bold flat scale-ornament and a shallow horizontal fluting are also details peculiar to this “Third” Style.

*The Fourth Style.*—There is a pictorial rather than a plastic quality about the ornament characterizing this style. Hieraticism and rigid stylization of forms give way to

realism and freedom of drawing. A certain amount of foreign influence is obvious.

This style can unquestionably be ranged in time with the T'ang Dynasty.

### INSCRIPTIONS ON BRONZES

Bronze, as a practically imperishable material and one which was in common use for the making of vessels to be handed down in a family as heirlooms, offered the Chinese an unrivalled medium for the preservation of family records. Hence we find full advantage taken, at any rate in earlier times, say before the Han Dynasty, of the possibilities in this direction, and inscribed bronzes may be said to be the rule rather than the exception. Owing to the widely differing shape and construction of the various types of vessel used for the purpose, the length of the inscription capable of being embodied on any particular example varied considerably. Consequently inscriptions are to be found ranging in length from one or two characters to several hundreds. There is also considerable variation, one might say evolution, in the styles of script employed, from the highly pictorial forms which belong to the Shang-Yin Dynasty down to the regular "square" writing found in inscriptions of Han date and later, which differ little from the standardized printer's type of to-day.

The content of the inscription varies naturally with the length. "Father Kuei", i.e. dedicated to that personage, is the meaning of a two-character inscription of familiar type. Many end up with instructions to "sons and grandsons" to preserve the vessel inscribed as a perpetual heirloom. Three sacrificial knives, recently dug up, have on their blades long tables of ancestors' names with their birth-dates, a sort of saints' calendar. Most of the longer inscriptions are devoted to the recording of a favour conferred on a vassal by his feudal lord and usually recite the speeches which accompanied the bestowal and the acceptance.

### CHINESE CLOISONNÉ

Although a mere child in years compared with the imposing antiquity of the bronzework, Chinese Cloisonné

PLATE XIX



VASE: GILT-BRONZE AND CLOISONNÉ ENAMEL

18TH CENTURY

H. 13½ in.

*Victoria and Albert Museum*

[Face p. 84.]



shares with the latter the same uncertainty as to its origins and the same curious lack of primitives. Tradition dates the introduction of the art of enamelling into China back to the period of the Yüan Dynasty (1280-1367), but the vast majority of the stock of extant examples belongs definitely to the eighteenth century, and particularly to the reign of the great Ch'ien Lung. Of the small band of obviously earlier pieces, it is difficult to believe that any can possibly go back prior to the fifteenth century. A good few examples bear the date of the Emperor Ching T'ai, 1450-6, and one even a Yüan date, Chih Chêng (1341-67), but in these cases the mark, like so many Chinese "date-marks", may be merely reminiscent rather than contemporary.

There is a definite development to be observed in a comprehensive collection of Chinese enamels. First would come what are usually and somewhat vaguely called Ming (the Ming Dynasty lasted, be it remembered, from mid-fourteenth to mid-seventeenth century). These attract at once by an assured boldness of design and breadth of treatment, as well as by a remarkable depth and purity of colouring, the grounds of deep rich blue being especially striking. At the same time the technique is not by any means perfect, the polish is dull, and the surface of the enamel shows numerous unwanted holes and pittings.

Then comes a transition period, usually associated with the long reign of K'ang Hsi (1662-1722), during which there is considerable improvement in technical finish, though the boldness of design and rich deep colouring which characterized the first period are no longer so apparent. When, however, we come to the equally long reign of Ch'ien Lung (1736-95), under whose auspices a remarkable renaissance of arts and crafts took place, we find a technical finish that is almost flawless, coupled, however, with a colour-range of much brighter tone (and considerably less aesthetic appeal), including the well-known turquoise-blue so frequently used as a background. Apart from the enamelling, the metal-work of the Ch'ien Lung products is solid and well finished, and very richly fire-gilt. Of subsequent work little need be said beyond that it tends to be carelessly finished and but sparingly gilded.

## JADES

by

DAME UNA POPE-HENNESSY, D.B.E.

JADE, perhaps the most satisfying material substance ever prized by man, appears, in its worked condition, to be co-extensive with the history and the life of the Chinese people. Dedicated millenniums before the Christian era, as the purest and most divine of natural treasures, to be the vehicle of communication with the unseen powers of the universe, it was adopted too as the emblem of human authority and the prophylactic against disharmony.

Regarding life as an effort after perfect adjustment between the two great principles the *yang* and the *yin*,<sup>1</sup> the seers of old China laid down that jade tokens of prescribed designs and colours if used in religious ceremonial, in the administration of the state, and in personal life would bring about that all-important adjustment. Therefore we find that under the earliest dynasties and probably until the advent of Ch'in Shih (221 B.C.) hieratic jades, administrative jades, and jades for personal wear were in use. The efficacy of jade extended also to the dead, for the same objects, either in miniature or in an inferior material, were in old days placed in the grave, the dead man in this manner being confided to the care of the powers of universe.

To Chinese sensibilities, which are in some respects finer than our own, jade has two qualities that we should not naturally attribute to it, a tactile value and an auditive value. Not only did the handling of jade engender suavity and composure, but tinkling pendants for the girdle and the

<sup>1</sup> Yang = male or positive principle in nature as opposed to *yin*.  
Yin = female or negative principle in nature as opposed to *yang*.

head would by the magic their music generated keep depravity from the heart.

The uses of jade are so embedded in the cultural consciousness of the Chinese people that it is almost impossible to overstress its significance and importance in their eyes, and it is one of the enigmas of Chinese art why in the earliest days this stone should have been accorded an intentional value entirely different from that of the contemporary bronze vessels also designed to serve religious purposes, and why until the third century before the Christian era it should have been regarded as a unique and consecrated substance. To the uninitiated the word jade connotes a bright translucent green stone, satiny in surface, ice-cold to the touch, and carved into elaborate or florid shapes. The earliest Chinese jades have none of these characteristics. They are often dull in hue, opaque in nature, and geometrical in design (Pl. XX). The less early jades, those now classed as of the period of "the Warring States" (481-205 B.C.) are ornamented with elegant stylized dragons and other animals, and these too appear to have been cut from native stone (Pl. XXI). We must clear our minds of the notion that we are going to see any brilliant green jades of an earlier date than the thirteenth century, and for this simple reason, that the locality in which the emerald jade was quarried was not opened up by Yunnan traders with Burma till the more important epochs of Chinese creative art had closed.

Jade or *yii* is usually classified under three headings: (1) nephrites from Eastern Turkestan and Yarkand; (2) dark green stone found near Lake Baikal and west of Yarkand; (3) jadeite from Burma. There is yet a fourth category embracing the indigenous nephrites of old China, for both in the Shansi district and in the neighbourhood of the Chou capital, Hsi-an-fu in Shensi, jade was found and adapted to ritual purposes.

The colour and quality of early jade emblems differ from those made of the imported materials, for the stone used under the earliest dynasties was often neutral in tone, brown, greenish grey, ochre, or cream. When it had no translucency of its own the workers sometimes tried to achieve an artificial translucency by cutting the material into thin sheets. On the occasions, however, when a clear

piece of jade fell into the hands of a carver it was treated with extraordinary artistic reverence and turned into a lovely object such as the yellow disk embellished with dragons brought back by Bishop White from the Lo-Yang tombs.

It cannot be precisely stated at what date foreign jade was imported into China. Khotan, known as the "Kingdom of Jade", was certainly sending in supplies in the second century B.C. In its territory were rivers having their source in the Kuen Lun Mountains and in these rivers the precious boulder-jades were found. Benedict Goes, a Jesuit lay-brother, who spent most of the year 1604 in Yarkand disguised as an Armenian merchant waiting to join a caravan for China, says that water-worn jades were of far higher quality and more valuable than the inferior slab-jade carved from the mountain-side. Many jade artists worked at that time in Khotan supplying China with vases, ornaments and even Buddhas,<sup>1</sup> and the profits made on the sale of these objects in China were remunerative in spite of almost any risk in transit. Centuries before Goes visited Yarkand the industry was well established. Hereditary jade-fishers would in spring mount their yaks and ride up to the fishing grounds, then wading in the icy waters would identify the stones they sought with their feet. "Ink-black", "snow-white", "kingfisher green", "bees-wax yellow", and "vermilion-red", were all valued colours, though the chief prize was "green as spinach with gold stars shining through". Official supervision was alert. As the stone was retrieved a sentinel struck a gong on the bank and made a mark against the fisherman's name, and as many pieces were required of him at the end of the day's work as there were marks against his name. The farming out of jade-fishing and jade-quarrying was one of the King of Khotan's principal sources of revenue. Goes related that the slabs cut with immense labour from the mountain side were "some two ells in size" and had to be reduced for transportation by camel to Cathay.

Vast quantities of the precious substance reached China from this source. Occasionally however the caravans were looted in the mountains. For example, in the eighth cen-

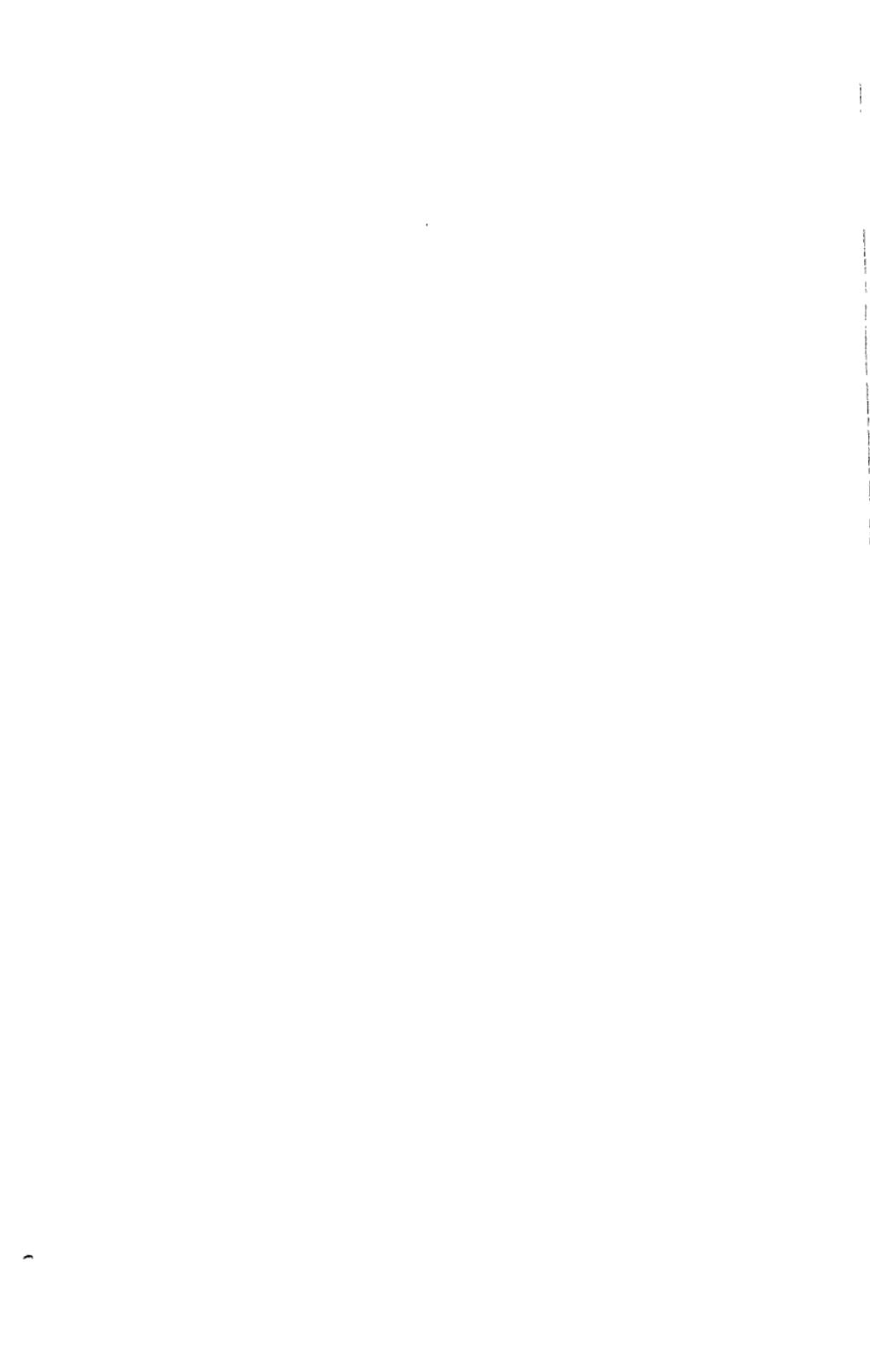
<sup>1</sup> A large Buddha was sent to Peking in A.D. 541.



TS'UNG; BROWNISH-WHITE JADE  
CHOU DYNASTY (1122-249 B.C.)  
H. 6 in.

*Victoria and Albert Museum  
(Eumorfopoulos Collection)*

[Face p. 88.]



tury a consignment of three hundred slabs, forty-five buckles, thirty vases, ten bracelets, three magic cylinders and a carriage ornament was despatched from Yarkand but failed to reach the Imperial Chamberlain to whom it was addressed owing to robbers having overpowered the escort. A thousand years later jade was being carried in ever greater quantities along the same road. By one caravan alone the Emperor Ch'ien Lung in the eighteenth century received thirty-nine slabs weighing over five thousand pounds.

When in 1774 a fine boulder arrived from Yarkand Ch'ien Lung was delighted and ordered it to be fashioned into a *wéng* (type of bowl), and on this bowl he wrote with his own hand a poem which was made permanent by his graver. Another treasure that was a source of great satisfaction was a "jar" which in the days of the Yüan Dynasty had been observed by the itinerant Franciscan, Blessed Oderic of Friuli, who had spent the years 1322-5 in Peking. The friar, who gave what is probably an inaccurate account of its size and shape, stated that it was made of "merdacas", a stone so precious that the vessel was reputed to be worth the price of "four cities". In Blessed Oderic's day it stood in the pavilion on the Green Mount, the artificial mound planted with large trees by Kublai Khan, and of which Marco Polo tells that the ground was covered with "ore of azure which is very green" and that "in sooth it was well named".<sup>1</sup>

At the fall of the Yüan Dynasty this "jar" had disappeared and it was a great happiness to Ch'ien Lung when it was discovered in a Buddhist monastery serving the ignoble purpose of receptacle for salted vegetables. Bringing it back to honour, the Emperor caused an ode recounting its story to be engraved upon it. We read that in the hall of the Green Mount also stood a cistern in black jade "big enough to hold more than thirty piculs of wine".<sup>2</sup> The black stone was intersected with veins and in conformity with these veins fish and animals had been carved upon the surface. The "jar" seen by Blessed Oderic may be identical with the wine container of white jade with

<sup>1</sup> *Marco Polo*, Vol. I, p. 326.

<sup>2</sup> *Bretschneider's Peking*, p. 35.

emerald flecks and moss-green markings described in the so-called 'Sung' Catalogue (*K'ao Ku t'u*) as the largest worked jade in China.

To one impressively large boulder or block of jade Ch'ien Lung (Pl. XXIII) devoted loving attention, arranging for it to be made into a memorial to a literary club which in the fourth century A.D. had met during the springtime to compose verse by the banks of a mountain stream. Ravines, cliffs, trees, sheltered nooks, pavilions, and five poets drawing inspiration from the scene were all coaxed out of the rock by the jade carver, and Ch'ien Lung, a virtuoso if ever there was one, composed for it as he composed for other cherished possessions a poem. "Only from Khotan", ran some of the words, "could a piece of jade be had large enough for this mountain. . . . We often read of this (the literary club) in books and now we rejoice to see the event in sculpture, and we would ask the people "Who is worthy to be called a jade-man (pure-hearted man) ?"

In a private collection in London are two of the largest and most remarkable jade animals known, an ox or buffalo sage-green in colour and a mare in that most admired of hues, black jade. Both are recumbent and until 1900 formed part of the Imperial treasure in Peking. The Emperor K'ang Hsi, when inspecting these animals, which were paraded annually in a sacred festival, enquired why he possessed no likeness of the dragon-horse that had brought to them the books of knowledge over the Yalu. A dragon-horse of white jade was at once made to fill the lacuna and it may to-day be seen companioning the ox and the mare as in former days in the Summer Palace.

From the Book of Rites of the Chou era (*Chou Li*) we learn that six ceremonial objects (*ch'i*) were indispensable to religious worship of Heaven, Earth, and the four quarters of space.

"With a sky-blue *pi*, worship is paid to Heaven; with a yellow *ts'ung* worship is paid to Earth; with a green *kuei*, to the East; with a red *chang*, to the South; with a white *hu*, to the West; with a black *huang*, to the North."

Six auspicious tokens (*jui*) are mentioned in the *Chou Li*. They served to classify the different states and

principalities as well as for the delegacy of power to officials.

"The sovereign holds a 'protective' *kuei*; the duke holds a 'pillar' *kuei*; the marquess holds a *kuei* in the shape of a bending human figure; the viscount holds a *pi* with grain pattern; the baron holds a *pi* with rush pattern."

So runs the Book of Rites and in Western collections we may find many admirable examples both of ceremonial objects and auspicious tokens.

The first of the ceremonial objects listed above, the *pi*, is a circular disc with a hole in the centre (Pl. XXII). The earliest specimens are sometimes irregular in shape. Some, owing to the scarcity of material available, have been made up and riveted out of two or more sections sliced from the same stone; some are made of exquisite light green jade and are fifteen inches in diameter. Most have suffered partial calcification from burial. Though the prescribed colour is blue (which is also green in Chinese), the colour as well as the size was often conditioned by the material available.

The second object, the *ts'ung* (Pl. XX) is described by a Chinese author as "square outside and round inside", in other words it is a cylinder to which four triangular prisms are attached in such a way as to form a rectangular wall. *Ts'ung* are sometimes plain and sometimes ornamented with strapping representing combinations of the trigrams Heaven (==) and Earth (≡≡). These cylinders are of all sizes and dimensions, squat, elongated, broad, narrow; some are of good workmanship, others roughly shaped. Great numbers of them exist and it is believed that in addition to their primary ritual use they had a secondary use in vegetation and fertility cults.

The third object, the *kuei*, described by a Chinese writer as "an oblong rectangle surmounted by a roof", is a narrow flat piece of jade pointed at one end like a lance-head, a phallic symbol signifying spring. *Kuei* are of all sizes and vary much in shape. In some the sides are tapered slightly to the base, in some one surface is divided longitudinally into two planes receding from a central backbone, some have bluntly angled heads (the *kuei* we see

clasped by gods and rulers are usually of this type) while others have the seven stars of the great bear engraved upon them. "At night", says a Chinese writer, "when the tail of the Great Bear points towards the East it is spring in the world." From the heavens the Chinese wrested a celestial almanac to serve in fixing their *yang* and *yin* celebrations. They observed the moon moving across the heavens through a crowd of stars and also observed the sun moving across the dome of heaven presumably through the same crowd of stars. By arranging for themselves a lunar zodiac it was possible to calculate the recurrence of full moons; and the rising of certain full moons coinciding with the setting of certain suns the astronomers were enabled to foresee the moments of simultaneity which indicated the two great annual feasts, the spring and the autumn equinox. It is clearly to the astronomers that we owe the inspiration of the geometric art in jade of the earliest Chinese dynasties.

The fourth object, the *chang*, with which the South was worshipped, has not with any certainty been identified. In the third century B.C. a dispute arose as to the shape of this jade emblem and it was then ordained that a red half-*pi* should be used for the purpose.

The fifth object, the *hu*, is still unidentified, but as we know it was used in the worship of the West and was emblematic of the Tiger Constellation ruling over the *yin* part of the year as the Dragon Constellation ruled over the *yang* part of the year, it has been assumed that it may have been a rectangular object with a stylized tiger or what is called a *tao-t'ieh* mask or ogre face engraved upon it.

The sixth object, the *huang*, is also an enigma. Chinese commentators on the Chou Li have explained it as half the perforated disk *pi*, but as it cannot have been identical with the *chang*, the suggestion that it was a flat segment of a jade circle, possibly a third of its diameter, is more acceptable.

• • • • •

One dynasty destroyed the art of another in China and it is supposed that many Shang-Yin objects were broken

PLATE XXI



(a) FISH: LIGHT-BUFF JADE  
CHOU DYNASTY (1122-249 B.C.)  
W. 3·20 in.

(b) SWORD-HILT: LIGHT GREEN JADE  
PERIOD OF WARRING STATES (481-205 B.C.)  
W. 3 in

H.R.H. *The Crown Prince of Sweden*



up in Chou days, but the great bugbear of the student of early Chinese jades is Shih Huang Ti or Ch'in Shih, the Napoleonic character thrown up in the third century B.C. by the most influential of the states of the Chou Empire, the Duchy of Ch'in. Even before the rise to power of this reformer Ch'in taste had prevailed and had either through contact with Scythians or other peoples introduced a new inspiration into Chinese art; the name adopted for this period for the purposes of this exhibition is that of "The Warring States". Ch'in rulers too are noted to have made changes in old custom, having, for instance, in 409 B.C. ordered officials of the Court to substitute a sabre in jade for the musical talisman their fathers and forefathers had worn at the girdle in more peaceful and conservative days. Ch'in shih, who desired to go down to history as the first Emperor of China, was an able, ruthless man who after assuming supreme power consolidated the old feudal states and then divided them for administrative purposes into thirty-six provinces. In order to ensure the safety of his empire he completed the Great Wall, and to establish his dynasty he ordered all records of past time to be destroyed. Further, to the end that no one might survive to reproach him with vandalism, he ordained that some hundreds of literati should be burned to death. Was it any wonder that men hastened to obey such a tyrant by burying in the ground or throwing into lakes and rivers the objects that witnessed to an older and possibly a more civilized administration?

When some of the relics made away with at this time were recovered in subsequent centuries, only too often their very purpose had been forgotten and men conjectured as to their meaning. So completely, for instance, had the use to which the *ts'ung* had been put fallen out of mind that it was listed in the pseudo-Sung catalogue as a "wheel-nave", for that was the object it most resembled to the compiler of that work. Through the *K'ao Ku t'u* has now been recognized as a forgery of much later date, the entries still have considerable interest. To Wu Ta-chêng, the Chinese archaeologist, who in 1884 published a critical work on Jade, *Ku yü t'u kao*, belongs the honour of identifying the so-called wheel-nave as a *i'sung*. Dr. Laufer stated

that in compiling his important study on Jade for the Field Museum, Chicago, he relied on Wu "as a disciple on his master".

It is possible that the innovator Ch'in shih caused the first official seal to be made in jade. Before his day the word denoting seal, *hsı*, had for radical *t'u* (earth); only in the year of his accession to power was the radical *yü* (jade) substituted for *t'u*. It was not out of keeping with this emperor's idea of his divine mission that he should employ a substance usually associated with religious practices to enhance his administrative authority.

One of the seals of the great Ch'in shih is described as a four-inch cube with a handle of five interlaced dragons. After his death this seal was taken over by the *Han* rulers who called it "the seal that transmits the state". Weathering many vicissitudes under rapidly changing dynasties it eventually found a resting-place with the *T'ang* regalia.

Immense importance was attached henceforth to an imperial seal. On the occasion of the proclamation of the Mongol conqueror of the Sungs, Kublai, as ruler of China, one of these seals made a dramatic appearance. While crowds watched the proceedings in "the grassy meadows by the river Kerulan, a certain stone spontaneously flew asunder" and "disclosed a great seal of graven jade". Thus was it indicated to a vanquished people who was henceforth to be their divinely approved over-lord.

Among the many treasures yielded by the soil of China must be mentioned the exquisite jade daggers or knives about a foot in length presumed to have been ceremonially used in sacrifices and to have been worn, at least in the state of Ch'in, at court functions. Axe-heads in jade have also been recovered, which from their elegance and ornamental notching may have been intended for carrying in the solstice dances which were performed jade-axe in hand. A halberd in jade, made after some metal prototype with a sharp cutting edge, is included in the Eumorfopoulos collection, as are some *ta kuei* or razor-shaped tablets pierced with three holes as if for slinging from the girdle. Tuan Fang, the great Chinese collector, discovered three of these *ta kuei* when repairing an old grave in the province of

Shensi over which he had jurisdiction. The interment had been made in 1053 B.C.

Of the numerous small articles of jade taken from the earth mention must be made of the *p'ei yü* or girdle pendants which made music for the wearer. "Formerly the great used to wear *p'ei yü* at the waist, that of the right sounded the note *ch'e* and *kio*, that of the left *kong* and *yin*." Our very word gong is derived from the word *kong* in the Chinese scale. A poem dealing with the home-sick thoughts of a Wei princess alludes to the delights of home, "the burst of gracious laughter and the cadent sound of the *p'ei yü*". Recently, on the site of old Lo-Yang necklaces and ornaments have been recovered from tombs, snake-dragon, twin female figure and single figure pendants have made their appearance, and as we consider them we think of the ladies who may have worn them. Confucius tells us that when he visited the lady wife of the Duke Ling, she greeted him from behind a curtain, prostrating herself invisibly twice while he listened to her bracelets and pendants making "the sound of jade as if a resonant stone had been struck".

Mention must also be made of the set of jades used in the preparing of a corpse for burial. Oval pieces covered the eyes, a tongue jade, usually in the form of a cicada, was placed in the mouth, the nostrils were plugged with octagonal pegs, the ears with longer pegs, and the other apertures of the body with still longer pieces. The navel was covered with an umbilicus of jade.

From very early days resonant stones were in use in China. Most usually they were cut like carpenter's squares and suspended one above the other in a sort of scale. This type of resonant stone is still in use in Confucian temples. Not only was the magic generated by music but its moral impulse was recognized.

"Sonorous stones give out a clear sound which evokes a sense of duty. The sense of duty evokes the sense of death. When the sage hears the sound of sonorous stones he thinks of officers who have died for their country."

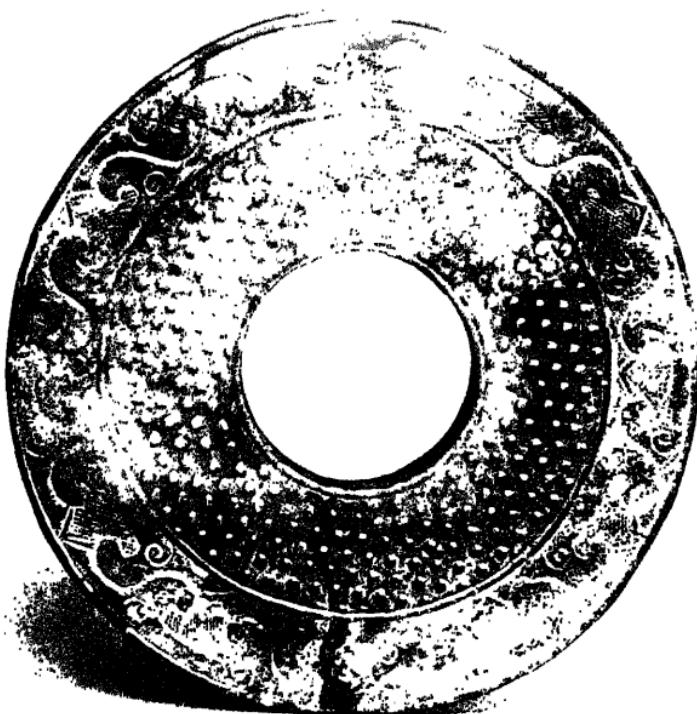
The *ju'i*, or "sceptre of good fortune" as it is often called, is a familiar object to everyone. Like other emblems it is

rooted in the past and like other emblems has lost part of its original significance. It is thought by some sinologists that its curves were intended to represent the Dragon or Lung Constellation presiding over the *yang* period of the year and identified with the coming of good. No very early *ju'i* has been seen in Europe, as yet. It is alleged, however, that under the Wu Dynasty in the third century A.D. a bronze casket was disinterred containing a *ju'i* of white jade. Good wishes were conveyed to officials by means of these "sceptres", and it is thought likely that the well-known *ju'i* belt-hook served the same lucky purpose for lesser folk. In the belt-hook the head (*fēng*) of the dragon looks back over the heart (*sin*) to the first part of the tail and there ends, whereas the "sceptre" is completed by an upward curve.

The dragon, of which many differing specimens are to be seen in the Exhibition, assumes many shapes and is associated with the spring and summer seasons over which the *Lung* or Dragon Constellation presides. The word *lung*, translated by English missionaries as "dragon", probably connoted a big migratory fish, such as the sturgeon. If this were the case, it would serve to account for the finny, whiskered and fish-like appearance of some of the earlier dragons. The *Lung* Constellation, after presiding over the *yang* period of the year, was said to bury itself at the autumn equinox and to give place to the Tiger Constellation. Maybe an analogy or parallel was drawn between the behaviour of the constellation *Lung* and the habits of the sturgeon of the Yellow River, for the sturgeon entered the Kung Hsien grotto at the autumn equinox to hibernate and emerged therefrom after six months to swim upstream and jump the rapids of Lung Mēn or Dragon Door, an exercise that coincided with the magic moment of equal day and night. According to Chinese mythology the metamorphosis of fish into heavenly body took place at the spring equinox.

In the geometric period of Chinese culture the dragon was probably severely conventionalized and may have been represented by a flat jade token or segment of a circle decorated with nodule or silk-worm pattern spirals. Many of these have been brought to light. Through the Lo-Yang

PLATE XXII



PI; GREEN AND BLACK JADE  
HAN DYNASTY (206 B.C.-A.D. 220) OR LATER  
Diam. 7·8 in.

[*Face p. 96.*



excavations we get to know other early types, some of them snake- or fish-like and some heraldic and alert—stylized creations of great spirit and beauty of line. The dragon in whatever form it appeared generated prophylactic energy and was a welcome mascot. Under the Han Dynasty the well-bred finely boned dragon vanishes and is superseded by a boneless, newt-like creature, which apparently performed the same functions as its predecessor. By Ming days the dragon had acquired some possibly Western characteristics, five claws, wings, legs, bristling antennæ, fire-breathing jaws, and though very imposing was no longer friendly or protective in appearance. It had become the creature we meet with on embroideries, vases and banners.

. . . . .

We must return for a moment to history in order to get a general idea of the reason of the changes we observe taking place in the form of jade objects as the dynasties pass. When the House of Ch'in was supplanted by that of Han (206 B.C.) the *literati* who had survived the purge crept out of hiding with their scriptures and were honoured as of old. Jade emblems, however, seem to have suffered an eclipse in public esteem, perhaps owing to the vast quantities that had been thrown away or buried. The ceremonial use of jade was revived in 110 B.C., when a Han emperor decided to follow the ancient tradition of making sacrifice upon the Mountain of the East, *T'ai Shan*. On this occasion we read that the procedure was improvised, as both the nature of the oblations and the order of the ceremony had been forgotten.

Towards the close of the fifteenth century jade plaques were discovered on the summit of *T'ai Shan* and in the eighteenth century two boxes of jade slabs came to light in the same locality. Dated A.D. 1008, they proved to be sacrificial offerings, each inscribed with one line of prayer characters.<sup>1</sup>

Buddhism, introduced into China in the 1st century A.D., exercised an immense influence on plastic art, including that of the jade worker. Carvings in the round or solid little charms shaped like animals—rat, frog, tortoise,

<sup>1</sup> Laufer, pp. 118, 245.

elephant and even tiny human figures—had long been in use in China, but from India came the notion of carvings on larger lines and it may be that it was owing to the spread of Buddhism that jade forms became less stylized and less significant. By degrees we begin to discern that tendency to suavity, which was later to lead to such artistically disastrous issues.

The artists of Han days, who seem to have been uninfluenced by formal religion, enjoyed embellishing the plane surfaces of old jades when found and ruined many archaic pieces by carving upon them rain-clouds, masks and newts (*ch'ih*). Their favourite hydra (newt) turns up in every capacity, as handle to an ornamental axe, to a drinking cup, crawling over early *pi* or *kuei* or merely as ornament to a buckle. It frequently holds in its mouth the *ling chih* or fungus of longevity.

The horse is supposed to have been introduced into art under the Han Dynasty, and it is to be noted that a "jade horse" appears on the Wu-liang bas-reliefs.<sup>1</sup> A fine carving in the round reached this country a few years ago—the head of a horse in pale green jade that had the rather dashing touch of Scythian spirit noticeable in what is now known as "animal style" works of art. It is included in the Eumorfopoulos collection at the Victoria and Albert Museum and is assigned to the Han epoch.

With the advent of the T'ang Dynasty to power the jade tradition becomes still more adulterated by foreign admixture of ideas. In a private collection in London is to be seen a figure in green nephrite standing in the deferential attitude of the pottery effigies placed at this period in graves. It is of its kind admirable, though as far as the original meaning attached to jade is concerned, it might equally as well have been made of wood or ivory or bronze.

The T'ang government had intercourse not only with India, but with Persia, Greece and Arabia, and the craftsmen of this day excelled in gold and silver work and in delicate metal inlays, making the exquisite Buddhist shrines which may be seen to perfection in the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. They do not, however, seem to have paid any special attention to the cutting of hard, intractable

<sup>1</sup> Chavannes, *Sculpture sur Pierre en Chine*.

materials such as jade or crystal. Under the Wei (sixth century A.D.) a jade Buddha was received from Khotan, and during the T'ang era great stone Buddhas made their appearance in China.

It is perhaps characteristic of the period that where the Hans had buried slabs of jade bearing plain graven characters, the T'angs caused their lettering to be filled with gold. Where the Sui had worn girdles of metal rings at court, the T'angs wore girdles of leather, to which were attached small plaques of jade. These girdles were retained by emperors of the Sung and Ming Dynasties.

Under the Sung emperors jade became once more of great importance and a subject for admiration. The high-fired glazes of the beautiful celadons of this time clearly are inspired by the emulation of the surface of finely polished nephrite. In art the Sung era is synonymous with strength, sobriety of design and excellence of workmanship. Spaces are no longer filled with ornament and jade vessels are chiefly remarkable for their solidity and deep undercutting. Many archaic bronze forms were imitated in jade and altar-vases were made and incised with classic patterns.

The Sung régime was broken up and eventually terminated by invasions of Mongols, whose advent, however, had no appreciable effect upon artistic development, for the Khans were content to permit the Chinese to organize themselves and, so long as they paid their taxes, do not appear to have interfered with the religious or other practices of their new subjects. The dynasty they initiated was known as Yüan (A.D. 1280-1368). Jade had no particular significance for the Mongol, though we learn from members of Catholic missions at the time resident in Peking that it was highly prized when it was a relic of antiquity. As a good number of nephrite dishes have been assigned to this period, it may be assumed that the Khans liked their food served in jade vessels, as they liked drawing their wine from jade cisterns.

We should expect of Yüan artists effigies of horses, for Marco Polo remarks on the immense veneration accorded to the imperial herds of white mares and stallions, but thus far any horses in jade that have been brought to Europe are attributed to earlier centuries. Marco Polo, who lived for

seventeen years under Mongol rule and for three of them held an official post at Yangchow on the Grand Canal, only alludes to jade in its capacity of valuable commodity.

The Chinese Ming or "Bright" Dynasty followed the Mongolian and lasted nearly three hundred years. It was in some respects a brilliant experimental epoch in the arts. As far as jade is concerned we find ourselves looking at intricately pierced surfaces and elaborate relief work. Filagree and carving of continuous and complicated pattern cover incense-burners, vases, boxes and other objects. Persian traders or even the artistic influence of Italian papal envoys may account for some of this, but it is probable that there was midway through the epoch a real declension in taste, a preference for dexterity to dignity.

After nearly three centuries the Ming Dynasty crumbled under nerveless rulers subservient to a dictatorship of eunuchs and became the easy prey of the Manchus. The last Ming emperor hanged himself upon the Green Mount so much admired by Marco Polo and Blessed Oderic. With the coming of the Manchus or the Ch'ing Dynasty, Cathay, the land of mystery, faded away and a modern China stepped flamboyantly upon the world-stage, with its insistent flaunting of imperial yellow, gorgeous gold dragons, and gaudy *ho-ho* birds. From the jade angle we must note as a sign of degenerate taste that it was decreed that the Ch'ing emperor should wear a court-girdle of yellow silk adorned with gold medallions, on which five-toed dragons were engraved.

The most renowned of the Manchu emperors, K'ang Hsi (1662-1722) and Ch'ien Lung (1736-95), offer parallels to the French monarchs, Louis XIV and Louis XV, not only in length of reign and general magnificence, but in their relations to the outer world and their system of attracting all wealth towards the centre of government, the imperial court.

K'ang Hsi ascended the throne of China in 1661, the same year that Louis XIV became King of France. Both were young at the time, and both occupied their respective thrones for fifty-four simultaneous years. K'ang Hsi survived his *confrère* by seven years and was succeeded by Yung Chêng his son. Unlike his father, Yung Chêng was no friend to Catholic missionaries and tried to re-establish

(a)



(b)



(a) BRUSH-POT: SPINACH-GREEN JADE  
18TH CENTURY  
H. 8 in.

*T. B. Walker Museum, Minneapolis*

(b) JADE MOUNTAIN  
PERIOD OF CH'IEH LUNG (A.D. 1736-95)  
W. 42 in.

*T. B. Walker Museum, Minneapolis*



traditional worship and to revive customs that had fallen into desuetude. After fourteen years he was followed by Ch'ien Lung, a reincarnation of K'ang Hsi in character and length of reign, for he ruled China authoritatively for sixty years. Apprehensive missionaries reported him to be "le plus grand potentat qui soit dans l'univers".

Under emperors thus blessed by the gods with longevity jade was dearly cherished. We have already seen how immensely Ch'ien Lung admired it and how diligently he sought to preserve the relics of the past and to encourage the art of jade sculpture. Nobles and rich men hastened to imitate him and to their order skilled technicians produced amazingly elaborate carvings. Many were the arrangements of sonorous stones for good-luck presents. Representations of carp and other fish suspended from intricately carved wooden frames were bestowed at weddings and on birthdays, citron fingers and lotus blooms and figures of immortals were in demand. It became the fashion to cram as much symbolism as possible into a gift. Thus peaches, swastikas, bats, fungus, the eight precious objects appear on everything. Ornament was added to ornament; overcharged with meaning and the multiplication of "happy auguries" objects of this period ceased to make any clear impression on the tired mind; their appeal was weakened, if not actually nullified, by iteration.

Poems were incised on jade and put together as "books", pictures were engraved on jade and framed as table-screens, set scenes of rocks, bamboos, cranes and fungus were contrived. Trees and flowers were fashioned to take the place of living vegetation. Many of the finest examples of these later jades are contained in the Bishop collection in New York, wherein may be seen roses and orchids, a branch bearing peaches, a plum-tree vase, and other imitations from nature. Furniture for the calligrapher's table, such as wrist-rest, water receptacle and brush are common, while bonzes, gods of longevity and other human figures abound. The Walker Art Gallery, Minneapolis, boasts of many fine pieces from the Imperial collections dispersed in 1912. Among them is Ch'ien L'ung's famous mountain, a photograph of which we are permitted to reproduce (Pl. XXIII).

In spite of the superb technical mastery displayed by the artists of this era, the eclectically designed and perfectly executed specimens they produced appear, compared with the severe and intentional creations of earlier days, frivolous, pretty and senseless. The divine character of jade is lost sight of and through being treated as if it were on a par with inferior materials, the virtue of the stone seems to evaporate. The effort of eighteenth-century craftsmen to spin out and make most of formulas was bound to end by exhausting the enthusiasm even of the most fervent of jade worshippers.

## TEXTILES

*by*

LEIGH ASHTON

IN the modern world China has lent its name to one of its most celebrated products ; in the ancient it performed the same service for another, silk. To the Greeks the natural fibre was known as *ser*, from the native word *ssiū*, the people as the *Seres* and the woven article, *serikon*.

The discovery of silk in China is associated by legend with the Empress Lei Tsu, wife of the third Emperor of China, and up till quite recently at the Spring Festival, while the Emperor ploughed a furrow at the altar of Agriculture, near the Temple of Heaven, the Empress offered mulberry leaves at the Hsien Tsan Tan altar beside the Pei hai lake in the gardens of the Forbidden City. Its history in China is of very ancient date, while in Europe till the time of the introduction of the silkworms to Constantinople in the sixth century A.D., all silk had to travel from China by land with consequent results to the price. It is on the tracks of this overland route through Central Asia that Sir Aurel Stein found in 1914 one of the earliest hoards of textile fragments known. This group and another found by the Koslov Expedition in 1924-5 south of Lake Baikal belong to the period of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.-A.D. 220). In the latter group the designs are for the most part on a small scale and intricate in conception, though a few silks with simple diapers are included, and are remarkable for the close affinities between their patterns and those on bronzes and lacquer of the same date. The cloud-scrolls, the elongated horses and dragons, the strong whorls and sure linear control seem to be related to both the complicated effects of the period of the Warring

States (481-206 B.C.), as well as to the more naturalistic features of the Han style, and it is probable that the Koslov finds may be dated in the first century B.C. Some of the Stein pieces, in which a more naturalistic style appears, may more fittingly be placed somewhat later, but both groups are largely of the same date. In all these fragments the sophisticated type of pattern and the control of technique indicate that even at this time the Chinese weavers had attained a degree of skill comparable to that of the metal- and ceramic-workers and that behind this date must stretch centuries of experiment and achievement of which we know nothing. But it is enough to show that to China we owe the elaboration of one of the most subtle of all human crafts, the employment of silk in the manifold complexities of weaving and embroidery. In China, where we know that the most rigid codes of etiquette controlled the events of everyday and ceremonial life, it is probable that equally strict rules controlled the combination of colours and their use in design and the confinement of certain colours to certain ranks in more modern times was probably followed at every period, though we do not know now what these rules were in the earlier times. In the same way the traditional use of accepted motives forms the basis of many patterns, and though the treatment of animals and foliage may be naturalistic the introduction of such motives is reflected in many instances by a certain rigidity, which is no doubt due to a prescribed formula of presentation.

The irruption of the Tartars at the fall of the Han Dynasty may have had a retarding effect on the luxury of the rich, but the spread of Buddhism with its many opportunities for the use of silk in vestments and in banners and the far-reaching influence of the Sassanian Persians must have kept the industry alive, while certain painted clay figures confirm the indication of the continuation of the use of patterned silks. With the period of the T'ang Dynasty (A.D. 618-906), a long period of prosperity, we are once again in the possession of a certain corpus of material. It will hardly be surprising if we find considerable traces of Sassanian designs, for not only was the T'ang period one of great territorial expansion so that the Chinese

PLATE XXIV

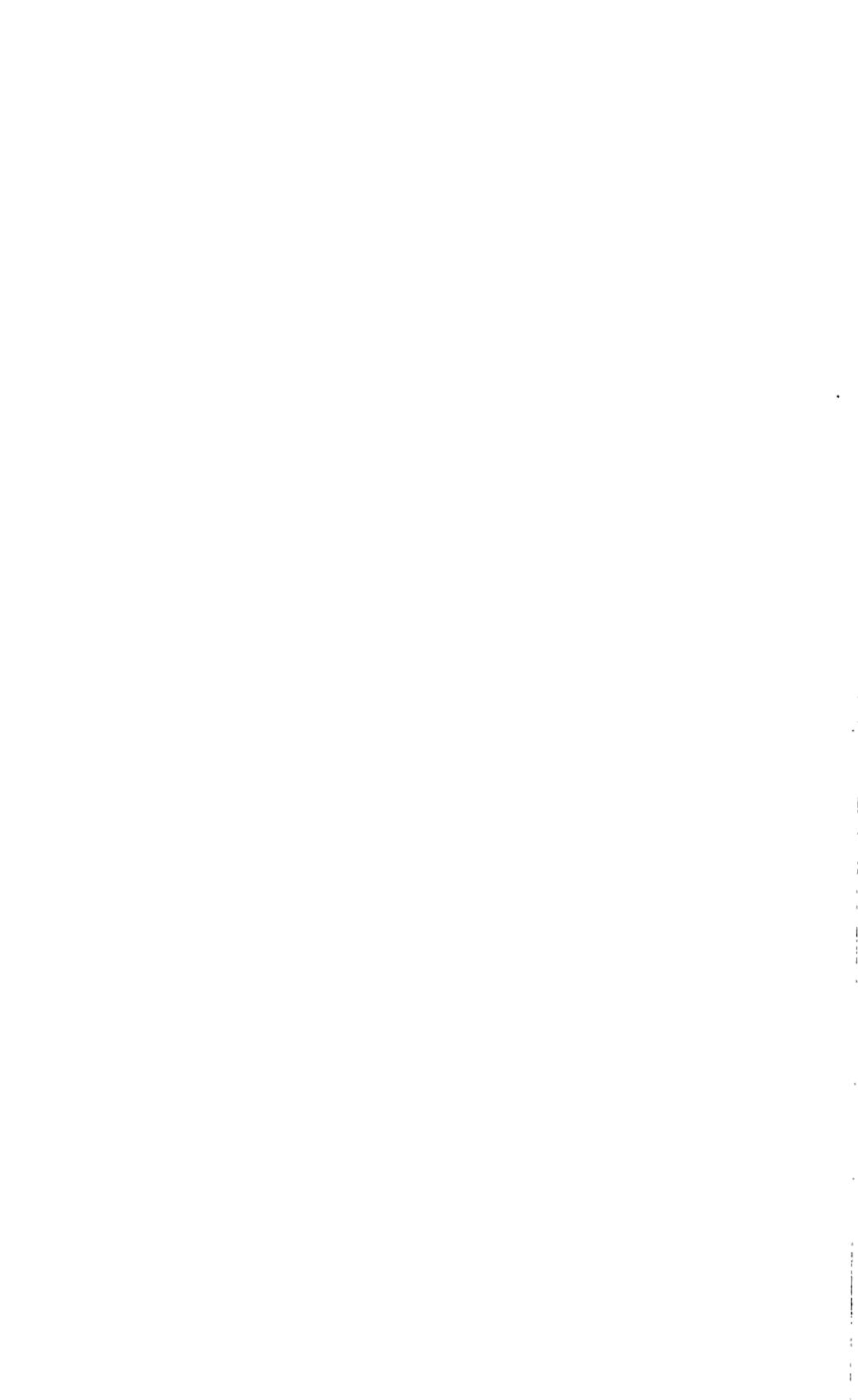


SILK BROCADE

18TH CENTURY

W. 42 in.

*Victoria and Albert Museum*



Empire was in immediate relation with Persia, but the last Sassanian king fled to Lo-yang where he set up his court. The frescoes from Kyzil in Chinese Turkestan, now in the Museum für Volkerkunde at Berlin, show this connection quite plainly, while the banner of Prince Shotoku (A.D. 572-623) formerly in the Horyuji monastery at Nara and now in the Museum at Tokio has borrowed an entirely Sassanian design of roundels with horsemen hunting lions—the Bahram Gur motive—and translated it by its typically Chinese style of drawing and the placing of Chinese characters on the horses' flanks into a native formula. It was at this time too that the extensive traffic by sea with the Arab world began to take shape and from literary sources we know how prized Chinese goods were in many parts of the Mohammedan world. This tremendous traffic is one of the most interesting and important chains in the relations between the Far and Near East and certainly without the enterprise of these sailors voyaging the long distance from the Red Sea to Calicut and other half-way ports it is improbable that Chinese goods would have found their way in such large quantities to the West.

The more essentially native products of this period show much the same varieties of floral and animal motives which we shall observe at a later date with, of course, the natural differences which we must make allowance for in the style of drawing prevalent at the different epochs. In addition to woven fabrics fine embroideries exist of the period among which the banner recovered by Sir Aurel Stein from the Caves of Ten Thousand Buddhas at Tun-huang and now in the British Museum, with life-size figures of the Buddha and attendants embroidered in red, yellow and green on a white silk ground, is the most notable.

The long period of the Sung Dynasty (A.D. 960-1279) saw relations with the West on a less extensive scale, and the internal policy of non-aggression and the development of the life of luxury and refinement which gave so marvellous a stimulus on the potters, must presumably have produced a correspondingly high level of taste on the part of the weavers, but we have practically nothing left which we can attribute with any safety to this date. The fine panel of weaving at the end of the painting of the Admoni-

tions of the Instructress by Ku Kai-chih in the British Museum may well from the seals affixed near it belong to this date and certainly with its splendidly spaced flowers in soft green, blue and yellow, it seems to have the breadth and dignity we should expect of a weaving of the period ; but it would be difficult to say with certainty that it may be attributed to so early a date. In the *Po wu yao lan*, published in the reign of T'ien Ch'i (1621-27), is given a list of favourite designs of Sung weavers, many of which are recognizable types of pattern ; Lions sporting with balls, Waterweeds and playing fish, sprays of Rose-Mallow, Argus pheasants and storks, Dragons in medallion pursuing jewels. In addition we can get some sort of picture of the types of design prevalent at the period from certain painted stoneware of the tzü chou group with designs derived from textile ornament.

With the establishment of the Yüan Dynasty (A.D. 1280-1368) and the tremendous reputation that Kublai Khan bore, trade with the West once more became established on a firm scale. Indeed, it is at this time that the peak of the Arab trade was reached. The prosperity of Egypt had much to do with this large increase of trade between East and West and during the Yüan Dynasty the Chinese junks, great ocean-going vessels with crews of two or three hundred, began to get as far as Aden, thus materially decreasing the price of goods, as the cost of trans-shipment was always considerable. We have a fairly large group of export Chinese weavings of this date preserved in the Cathedral treasures of Europe. Conspicuous among them is the brocaded tissue in the Marienkirche at Danzig with a design of parrots in octagons, the intervening spaces occupied by dragons. This weaving, one of a number of a similar kind in the same church, is woven in black and gold, the metal thread consisting of strips of leather with the gold pasted on flat. This type of thread is usually assumed to show a Chinese origin and certainly differs from the normal Western type in which the metal is wound round a core, but there are certain German mediaeval weavings in which it is employed and it is possibly not safe to assume that a tissue is Chinese because of the presence of this type of thread without the additional evidence of the style

of design. In this particular case the drawing shows a distinctive Chinese flavour while the presence of Arabic lettering on the wings with the title "en Nasir" seems to show that this fabric was woven for Muhammad Ibn Qalâun (A.D. 1293-1341), to whom the Arabic chronicler Abu el Fida records the presentation in 1323 by a Mongolian mission of 700 pieces of textile with the Sultan's titles woven on them.

While this weaving is conspicuously Chinese in drawing many of this group are much less definitely so, and considerable dispute has reigned at various times over the country of origin for the family. In particular, a number of the products of the factories at Lucca and Venice seem to come very close to the type. But a certain looseness of weaving and the use of the flat strips of gold thread may be taken as preliminary indications of the probability of Chinese origin, while the essential tricks of drawing employed by the Chinese designer make it possible as a rule to decide in favour of East rather than West.

These exported pieces were probably very different in style from those woven for the Chinese market, and indeed a few silk damasks recovered from mediaeval tombs in Egypt show a much more markedly Chinese type of design with naturalistic lotus plants, cloud forms, medallions with Chinese characters such as "Shou", the symbol of longevity, worked into the pattern.

Again we can see from Persian miniatures of the fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries what the style of textile prevalent in China must have been, and the curious correspondence in some of the designs on the porcelain painted in underglaze blue of the period shows that in both industries the same style of pattern-books must have been in use. These patterns consist of small floral diapers, detached birds and animals, medallions with elaborate dragon patterns, while in the case of costume extravagantly shaped collars of a type which also appear on the shoulders of porcelain vases are often to be seen, with naturalistic and pictorial patterns on them. A drawing in the Boston Museum for one of these collars with a design of warriors fighting shows clearly to what a length these naturalistic compositions could be carried for the use of textiles, while

other drawings of similar type are in the Seraglio library at Constantinople. Some of these drawings are Chinese, while others are of the Persian school of Herat under strong Chinese influences.

This naturalism is a marked feature of all Ming (1368-1644) and Ch'ing (1644-1912) textile designs. Many of the finest designs and the most typically Chinese are floral in character. The flowers of the four seasons, the peony, the prunus, the lotus and the chrysanthemum are perhaps the commonest of all the flowers used, with the magnolia, the daisy, the aster, the narcissus, the orchid as second favourites, while the skilful use of the scrolling stems and tendrils shows the Chinese designer at his best.

In addition to silk tissues and brocades velvet was a material at which the Chinese weaver excelled and the deeply-cut pile, often on a ground into which metal thread has been introduced, provided him with some of his most splendid effects. It does not however seem likely that they made velvets at a very early period. Italy is generally accepted as the country of origin of velvet and it may well be that the Chinese derived their ideas of it from the West, as we know of many sixteenth-century Persian and Turkish velvets, and it is certainly not earlier than this that the first Chinese velvets appear. This contact with the West attained its fullest scope after Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape of Good Hope (1498), when first the Portuguese, then the Spanish, and lastly the Dutch founded stations in China. In England, by the reign of Charles I, the taste for Chinese things had begun to be of considerable importance, and on one of his ~~proclamations~~, dated 1631, specific mention is made of "silk, satin and embroidered carpets" from China. This close connection with Europe had its repercussion on China, though in no marked way till the middle of the eighteenth century when a "goût Européen" achieved considerable popularity in Court circles in the reign of the Emperor Ch'ien Lung.

Among the most remarkable of the textiles are the woven robes. Many of these are executed by the tapestry-weaving process, known in China as *k'o ssu*. This is exactly the same method as that used in Europe for large wall-hangings, but in China silk only was used for warp and

weft with, as a rule, a considerable proportion of metal thread. The fineness of the work remains unrivalled in any country or at any time and in some of the detached panels where landscape compositions are used the appearance is almost exactly that of a painting ; indeed, in many instances, some of the smaller details are filled in by the brush though it is sometimes assumed that this technique did not come into use till the nineteenth century. These woven textiles are rivalled by the embroideries, known in China as *Hsin hua*. The majority of those in European hands date from the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. The stitches mainly employed are satin, long and short, stem and Chinese knots, while in the treatment of gold and other thick thread, couching and laidwork are also much used. Floss silk as well as the ordinary variety is frequently employed. Besides the floral devices, in embroidery as well as in weaving the most popular of Chinese motives, many others are used and many of these have a symbolical significance. The peach, signifying long life ; the pomegranate, many children ; the butterfly and bat, happiness ; the bamboo, deer and crane, longevity ; the mandarin ducks, wedded bliss ; while other animal motives employed are the dog of "Fo", the ch'i-lin or unicorn, the phoenix, the dragon and the elephant. The dragon of course has always been one of the most important features of Chinese decoration.

Certain symbolical objects are generally used in conjunction. Conspicuous among these sets are the "twelve Ornaments", of which the whole number might only be used on garments to be worn by the Emperor : the axe-head, water-plants, flame, a pair of dragons, two libation-cups, one with a tiger in it the other with an ape, a pheasant or a pair, mountains, stars, the sun with a "three-legged bird", the moon with the hare of immortality, rice-grains and the symbol "fu", resembling a double E-shaped fret. Other groups of this kind are the Pa kua or Eight Trigrams, devices in line representing the elements of nature, the Earth, the sky, the water, the air, fire, wind, thunder, and the hills ; and the Pa chi hsiang or Eight Buddhist emblems : the Holy Wheel, the umbrella, the canopy, the reliquary, a pair of fishes, the lotus, the conch-shell and

the Chang or endless knot, a symbol of longevity. One of the commonest designs on robes is the border-pattern of waves from which rises the sacred Buddhist mountain, Mehru.

Large quantities of embroideries were made for the European market in the eighteenth century and the influence of the style may be clearly traced on English coverlets and curtains of the Georgian period. Both for the Portuguese and for the Spanish market the Chinese executed embroideries in large quantities and the celebrated Spanish shawl started its career in China. This type of shawl, with its heavily-embroidered crêpe ground, was also popular in England and France from 1830-50.

Among the most frequently encountered embroideries are small squares with various animal motives. These are the insignia of official rank and the various grades, and their emblems are as follows :

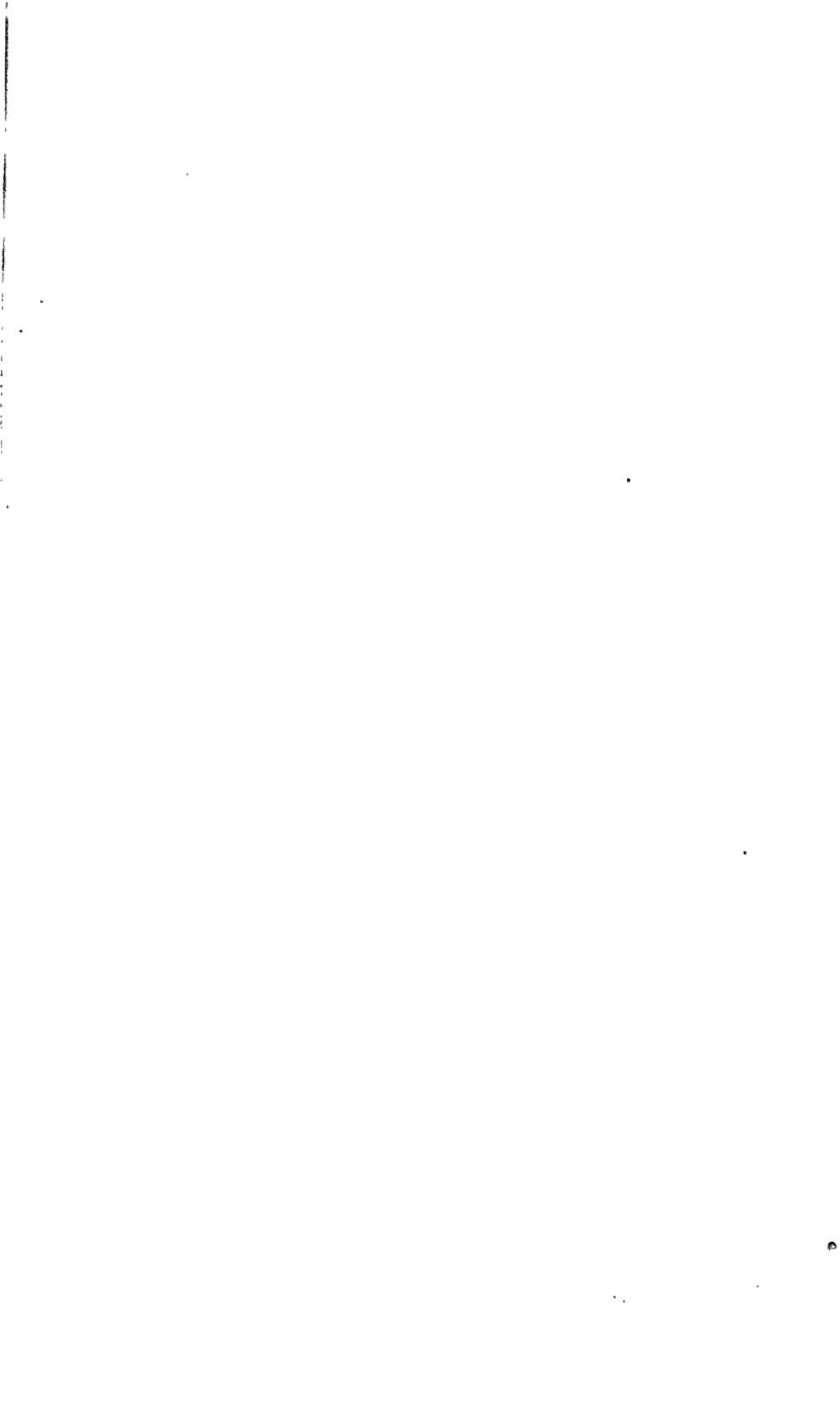
Grade.	Button.	Insignia.	
		Civil.	Military.
1. Red.	Plain coral.	White crane.	Ch'ilin.
2. Red.	Engraved coral.	Golden pheasant.	Leopard.
3. Blue.	Sapphire.	Peacock.	Panther.
4. Blue.	Lapis.	Wild goose.	Tiger.
5. White.	Crystal.	Silver pheasant.	Black Bear.
6. White.	Adularia.	Egret.	Spotted Bear.
7. Gold.	(Plain)	Mandarin Duck.	Tiger Cat.
8. Gold.	(Engraved).	Quail.	Seal.
9. Gold	(Engraved).	Fly-catcher.	Rhinoceros.

The Emperor alone could wear five-clawed dragons' facing to the front. Princes of the first rank might wear them on front and back, but on the shoulders their dragons were in profile. Princes of the second rank wore five-clawed dragons in profile, of the third four-clawed dragons facing the front, of the fourth four-clawed dragons in profile.

While some fragments of early carpets were recovered by Aurel Stein in his Central Asian expedition, and a few pieces exist in the Shōsō-in at Nara of T'ang times, it seems likely that the majority of Chinese carpets were produced at a comparatively late date. It is probable that contact with the nomad tribes on the Western borders first brought

the Chinese into touch with people to whom carpet-weaving was second nature, but in any case in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries large numbers of carpets were produced, while a few may go back as far as the Ming Dynasty. The woollen-pile examples are loosely-knotted and the designs are executed for the most part in different colours to those in favour in the Nearer East, yellow and blue being the predominant shades. A peculiar feature of the technique is the cutting of the pile to offset the angularity of the design. This process, which leaves a curious sort of halo round the contours, is a unique feature of Chinese carpet-weaving. The more conventional types of carpet have many of the elements of design we should expect, with lotus-scrolls, key-borders and circular medallions and some of the smaller panels, for use on chairs or thrones, have distinctively shaped ends. Other carpets for use as pillar-decoration, a type only known in China, are pictorial in drawing and the pattern is only completed when the two sides are joined round the pillar. Human figures are often found on these pillar-carpets or dragons and a border of waves is often seen at the base. Some splendid examples exist of silk carpets in many of which metal thread is used with admirable effect and it seems possible that some of this group may be of a comparatively early date. The Chinese silk carpet is among the best examples of a craft which often seems to be using an unsuitable material to its purpose: the "plush" effect so noticeable in many Persian silk carpets is conspicuously absent, while the subdued colourings lack the over-emphasized sheen so unpleasing in many of the Persian pieces. Many Chinese rugs are of extremely small size and may have been used more as furniture-coverings than as floor-mats. These small examples are often exceptionally charming in colouring and in design, a soft-brick-pink combined with two shades of blue and primrose-yellow being among the most delightful range of shades, and while the Chinese weavers cannot be said to compete with their magnificent rivals of the Nearer East, in their own particular, if limited, way they have a charm and distinction which marks them out as worthy of a country in which the Textile arts are often brought to so happy a conclusion.

S





1

Calcutta  
25/5/76

Central Archaeological Library,

NEW DELHI.

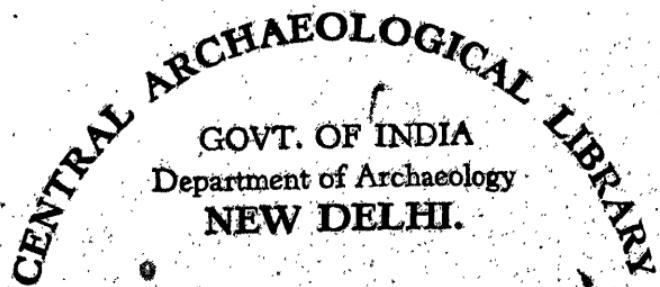
10607

Call No. 709.51/ ASH.

Author—Ashton, L.

Title—Chinese Art.

*"A book that is shut is but a block"*



Please help us to keep the book  
clean and moving.

S. B., 148, N. DELHI.